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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 12

DECEMBER 1950

Number 3

## *Poets and Prizes*

JOHN CIARDI<sup>1</sup>

WITHIN the last two years, four poets have received nationally publicized prizes. Peter Viereck and Gwendolyn Brooks have received successive Pulitzer prizes, William Carlos Williams has received the National Book Award of the Book Industry, and Wallace Stevens has received the Bollingen Foundation prize. (The last-mentioned as reconstituted under the direction of the Yale library after the public furor attending its earlier award to Ezra Pound. At the time of the Pound award the prize was administered by the Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress.)

A seemingly inescapable feature of such awards is that all of them are specified for superlative performance: for the "highest achievement," for the "best book," for the "most significant" work of the period covered by the award. Thus, in two years we are offered the grammarian's absurdity of four "best" poets.

Obviously there is nothing to be gained in parsing out such technicalities for their own sake; literature is the home of difference of opinion. The technicality will,

however, underline the fact that each committee was duty bound to consider all entries. It will further point up the fact that in voting for A's as "the best" one must *ipso facto* vote against all others. When we further consider the wide differences in the work of these poets and the fact that each of these committees has singled out a different recipient for its honors, we may well ask "What are the measures?"

Let me suggest a hypothetical experiment. Let us assume that you appoint from among our literary figures any given number of committees and assign to each the task of selecting a "best" poet of 1950. Let us further assume that you make each committee self-perpetuating and repeat the assignment for, say, ten years. What sort of results would you expect? I should expect anything but general agreement among the committees. I should, however, expect to find a discernible tendency in the *kind* of choice made year in and year out by each committee. I should be extremely surprised, for example, if a committee that had made an award to R. P. T. Coffin should later make one to Ezra Pound: I cannot see such a range of choices as containable within one set of tastes.

<sup>1</sup> Harvard University; editor, *Mid-Century American Poets*.

I believe there is a discernible bias of this order in the deliberations of these committees and that it reflects central differences in our present critical theory, just as the work of these four poets represents fairly accurately the range of differences to be found in our present poetic practice. A consideration of these tendencies is, therefore, a consideration of the current state of poetry.

Since the Book Industry award has been offered only once to date, we shall obviously be unable to claim any general tendency for it. The Bollingen prize, to be sure, has been awarded only twice, yet here the tendency seems rather clearly established. The successive awards by this committee to Ezra Pound and Wallace Stevens (both of them "difficult" poets in the common parlance), the position taken by its sponsors at the time of the Pound controversy, and the literary reputation of the members of the committee all seem to point consistently to a direction that we may tentatively call "the literary left." Later, we shall examine this position more carefully, but, if "the left" may be rinsed of political connotation, it will serve momentarily.

It may be significant, too, that both the Bollingen and the Book Industry committees have thus far made awards exclusively to poets long recognized as influential but consistently ignored by the Pulitzer judges. It seems certainly true of the Bollingen and possibly true of the Book Industry committee that these new awards are in part, at least, repudiations of what we may call "the Pulitzer bias."

That bias is, by now, rather thoroughly documented. Here are the Pulitzer selections in poetry since the beginning:

1922 Edwin Arlington Robinson	1936 R. P. T. Coffin
1923 Edna St. Vincent Millay	1937 Robert Frost
1924 Robert Frost	1938 Marya Zaturenska
1925 Edwin Arlington Robinson	1939 John Gould Fletcher
1926 Amy Lowell	1940 Mark Van Doren
1927 Leonora Speyer	1941 Leonard Bacon
1928 Edwin Arlington Robinson	1942 William Rose Benét
1929 Stephen Vincent Benét	1943 Robert Frost
1930 Conrad Aiken	1944 Stephen Vincent Benét
1931 Robert Frost	1945 Karl Shapiro
1932 George Dillon	1946 (No award)
1933 Archibald MacLeish	1947 Robert Lowell
1934 Robert Hillyer	1948 W. H. Auden
1935 Audrey Wurdeman	1949 Peter Viereck
	1950 Gwendolyn Brooks

If only to the superior eye of hindsight, this certainly seems an amazing list. Whatever the merits of the poets who have won Pulitzer prizes—and in a number of cases at least there can be no argument on the rightness of the award—the list of poets ignored by the Pulitzer judges seems flatly incredible. We may assume perhaps that Eliot's expatriation disqualified him. We can only wonder what disqualified Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, E. E. Cummings, and Hart Crane. One might add John Crowe Ransom, perhaps Allen Tate, perhaps even Robinson Jeffers. Certainly no meaningful survey of the achievement of twentieth-century American poetry could be undertaken without central attention to the work of at least the first six of these non-Pulitzer poets.

The omission of these poets is all the more incredible when one considers some of the specific choices made by the Pulitzer judges. In a quick check of my bookshelves I compiled the list of amazing choices shown in Table 1.

Random as it is, I think the list speaks for itself: any committee that could

make those decisions when faced with those choices has its bias fixed in grooves of steel. True, the more recent Pulitzer awards have been somewhat less sedentary, but the historic tendency of the Pulitzer prize remains unmistakably clear: at all costs the Pulitzer judges will prefer an easy clarity, even the clarity of mediocrity, in preference to a potentially rewarding difficulty.

"clarity" versus "difficulty" and to let it go at that is to leave matters confused. Clear to whom? Difficult for whom? I am constantly told, for instance, that poets I have found richly rewarding are not only "difficult" but "unintelligible." I cannot believe that I am deluding myself in enjoying these poets. Nor will I pretend that I "understand" everything they say. It would never have occurred

TABLE 1

Year of Award	Pulitzer Poet	Also Published in Period Covered by Award
1927.....	Leonora Speyer	Hart Crane, <i>White Buildings</i>
1934.....	Robert Hillyer	Hart Crane, <i>Collected Poems</i>
1935.....	Audrey Wurdeman	W. C. Williams, <i>Collected Poems</i> (1st ed.)
1936.....	R. P. T. Coffin	Ezra Pound, <i>Cantos XXXI-XLI</i>
1937.....	Robert Frost (third award)	E. E. Cummings, <i>No Thanks</i>
1938.....	Marya Zaturenska	Marianne Moore, <i>Selected Poems</i>
1939.....	John Gould Fletcher	Wallace Stevens, <i>Ideas of Order</i>
1940.....	Mark Van Doren	Wallace Stevens, <i>The Man with the Blue Guitar</i>
1941.....	Leonard Bacon	E. E. Cummings, <i>Collected Poems</i>
1942.....	William Rose Benét	E. E. Cummings, <i>50 Poems</i>
		Ezra Pound, <i>Cantos LII-LXXI</i>
		Wallace Stevens, <i>Parts of a World</i>

Anyone at all aware of the contemporary scene in poetry will recognize the differences between the champions of "clarity" and those of "difficulty" as the literary war of the moment. It would be rash at this point to decide exactly which side the Book Industry committee will finally join. It seems most certain, however, that the Pulitzer committee and the Bollingen committee are in opposition, and it seems reasonable to expect their future courses to follow present tendencies. True, as some of the so-called "difficult" poets become elder statesmen, the Pulitzer committee may get around to recognizing them. In no case, however, can it be believed that the Bollingen committee will ever make an award to Robert Hillyer or to R. P. T. Coffin.

But to label this central schism as

to me to put the question of poetic pleasure in those terms. I should have thought myself too busily happy reacting to the poem to wonder whether or not I was "understanding" it. I don't "understand" the painting in the Sistine Chapel, but what painting it is!

What does underlie the "clarity" versus "difficulty" argument? I think a small exchange that took place one evening between Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost will help make it clear. As Mr. Frost reports it, it had been an evening of friendly banter. "Frost," Stevens said at one point, "the trouble with you is, you write on *subjects*." Frost answered, "And the trouble with you is, you write *bric-a-brac*."

This is close to it, but we shall have to rephrase it. By "writing on subjects" we

must understand the willingness to let a large part of the poem rest on its prose relationship (moral, commonsensical, philosophic, referential) to reality. By "writing bric-a-brac" we must understand an insistence on the poem as a unique medium constituting a reality of its own, as does music, for instance. "Subjects" poetry seeks to require identification of the object or situation being discussed. "Bric-a-brac" poetry seeks to be a self-entering, self-demanding, self-sealing art form. The one reports a world and comments on it; the other seeks to make a world. One tends to be denotative; the other, connotative. Bric-a-brac is related to the experimental temper in our literature and to French symbolism. Subjects poetry is related to common sense, to "the tradition," and to Protestant moralism. Obviously, then, bric-a-brac tends to require of the reader a considerable detachment from the ordinary illusion of reality. It is, therefore, difficult for the prose-minded to perceive, and so the argument emerges as clarity versus difficulty—with, it must be added, all journalism on the side of "clarity."

If we think of this division as a line, we should obviously place the Bollingen and the Pulitzer committees on opposite sides. The same line will serve to divide our poets. We might, in fact, make a graphic representation of it. But to be accurate we shall require five figures instead of four. The first figure, well to the left, will be Wallace Stevens. Second, still to the left but nearer center, will be William Carlos Williams. Third, substantially to the right, will appear Peter Viereck, the poet. He is followed in fourth place by Gwendolyn Brooks, who will appear further to the right. And finally, not properly in the picture at all but trying desperately to blast his way in, will appear the small and distraught figure of Peter Viereck, journalist.

Without proper captioning, however, the intent of our little cartoon may all too easily be distorted. The following brief comments, therefore, are in lieu of captions.

Wallace Stevens is one of our senior poets, and one of the least read. The smallness of his audience is not the result of any innate difficulty in his work, though there is much of it that is truly difficult. Rather, it is a result of the difference between Stevens' sense of reality and that of his potential audience. Where most readers seek a prose-sense nexus in the poem, Stevens seeks what he has called "another consciousness," a sense which

makes music seem  
To be a nature, a place in which itself  
Is that which produces everything else.

"Secrete us in reality," he has the Young Captain say, and later, in *Holiday in Reality*, he tells us in his own person:

Intangible arrows quiver and stick in the skin  
And I taste at the root of the tongue the unreal  
of what is real.

This sense in Stevens that reality is the opposite or nearly the opposite of what the world accepts as reality is the main theme of the poetry: "Everything as unreal as real can be." Or, as he puts it in his latest book, *Auroras of Autumn*,

Reality as a thing seen by the mind,  
Not that which is but that which is apprehended.

This is a frame of mind that lends itself to easy ridicule by the champions of "subjects." It is this sense, too, that makes Stevens unpopular in many of the academies. For the world is on the side of subjects, the traditions of pedagogy are on the side of subjects. And at ten o'clock in the morning in the classroom it is even possible to believe the world is, in fact, composed of subjects. So much the worse for the classroom: poetry must remain

free to explore all states of consciousness. In addressing a poet like Stevens, the good teacher must take his nights into his mornings.

For, at the center of all Stevens' sense of things, lies a denial that what we call "logical process" is the essential way the mind works. There is instead a large sense of the total mind, of the tease of compelling irrationalities, of the dark stir of unconscious responses, and of the unreality of what logic has invented as its illusion of being.

This desire to give form and order to the total mind rather than to its logical excerpts alone has sometimes led Stevens to strangely esoteric effects. So the famous lines from *Harmonium*:

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan  
Of tan with henna hackles, halt!

Louis Untermeyer finds "little in these lines to feed the central hunger which is at the core of all senses." But whose central hunger? Whatever such pious noises made in the name of criticism may mean, they clearly miss the fact. These lines are from a poem in a complex mood which is half play, half seriousness. The poem is addressed to a thoroughbred bantam cock seen in a pine wood. In the pedigree book the cock is registered as Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan. Stevens is here playing with the ridiculous unreality of this over-named bantam amid the huge and unnamed pines. Whatever the central hunger of the subject-hunter may be, even he will find significance here if he will let it materialize for him.

But even as a tour de force these lines derive from an impulse that is wholly contained within a coherent and artistically orderly exploration of experience. "There is a sense in sounds beyond their meanings," Stevens writes in *Transport to Summer*. The rigid discipline with which he presents this unwordly sense of

things has made Stevens one of our most suggestive poets. Perhaps it has made him a poet's poet. It seems doubtful that he can ever be read as widely as, say, Robert Frost. I suspect, however, that as long as the English language is spoken there will always be among the most sensitive readers those who will find Stevens' poetry more richly persuasive than that of any poet now writing. Certainly the Bollingen recognition has long been due him. Perhaps in time even the Pulitzer committee will learn to read him.

William Carlos Williams shares much of Stevens' sensibility. He, too, has found his sense of the unreality of what the world calls real—and of the imponderable reality of things apprehended by the imagination. James Joyce as a young man used to roam the streets of Dublin, saying to himself for the joy of the taste of it upon his tongue, "the ineluctable modality of the visible." Williams might have taken the slogan for his own.

For Williams began as an imagist, and from the beginning he has sought to let the image, the thing, stand for its own untranslatable self, free of comment or moralization. Nor has his work ever lost its imagistic impress: it stands bare on the page, the unembellished presence of things. Unfortunately, it is a quality of this sort of poetry that one cannot excerpt from it. But one may turn at random to Williams' work for examples of the process at work. I thumb the *Selected Poems*, and I see "The Red Wheelbarrow," "The Attic Which Is Desire," "Nantucket," "The Locust Tree in Flower"—all of them pure examples of the poem built on its unembellished observation of the thing.

In contrast to Wallace Stevens, Williams' insistence on the thing itself has led him to the deliberate usage of prose elements within the poem. *Paterson*, his tetralogy-in-process, is built on a series

of alternate passages of prose and poetry. Only in the interplay of the poetic and the nonpoetic, Williams implies, can there arise a real contact with experience. And here again we see the poet insisting on a total subject matter embracing all the areas of the mind, as opposed to the conservative insistence on the logical extract of things, or on things "fit for poetry."

In developing from imagism to the kind of reportage that we find in *Pater-son* and in his later short poems, Williams has worked through a number of theories of poetic diction. At one time he argued that poetic diction was forever distinct from common speech. Yet more and more, of late, he has sought the intonation and idiom of the spoken American language.

This concern with the American tongue, together with Williams' imagistic influences, has resulted in a rather baffling prosody. No one, including the imagists themselves, seems to have had any notion of what constitutes a line of imagist poetry: it seems capable of starting at any point and of breaking off at any point. The imagist would probably claim that he was building the line either as a breath group or for the presentation of a single image (perhaps for both). In practice, however, neither of these principles is carefully applied. Williams, like the imagists, has abandoned meter. Most recently he has called, a bit overdramatically, one feels, for the liberation of poetry "from the tyranny of iambic pentameter."

The result, and it may be an enduring weakness of some of the poems, has been a prosody that seems arbitrary. If there is, in fact, a principle, I for one cannot find it. But, if this is arbitrariness, it yet remains the arbitrary working of a magnificent sensitivity. Whatever bewilderingments may arise from certain passages of

Williams, he has created a world and entered it meaningfully. His achievement of that world has been one of the triumphs of our poetry. As with Stevens, Williams' recognition by the prize committees has been much too long delayed. Current rumor has it that Williams will receive the 1951 Pulitzer prize for his forthcoming *Collected Poems*. It will be none too soon.

As we cross our center line from the reality of the unreal to what both Stevens and Williams might call the unreality of the real, we cross also from the consideration of poets whose honors have been long overdue, to less certain quantities. Both Peter Viereck and Gwendolyn Brooks are younger poets. Of both of them it might reasonably be said that they have had their reputations given them by the Pulitzer judges, though in Viereck's case it must be added that his own journalisms as champion of "a third force in poetry" have kept him in current comment. Neither of these poets, in any case, has produced a body of poetry or a practice of poetry comparable with that achieved by Stevens and Williams.

It has been implied concerning Peter Viereck that there seem to be two of him. One, the poet, is capable of magnificent utterance, if only between bursts of rant. The other, the journalist, seems all rant. I trust Viereck the poet: out of whatever subconscious areas of the mind the best of his poems come to him, they come with music, with insight, and with persuasion. I distrust Viereck the journalistic champion: his aesthetic seems no more than a rashly bellowed series of truisms, and through all of it one is struck by the postures of the self-advertiser.\* I have had to conclude that

\* See Viereck's essay "My Kind of Poetry" in my anthology *Mid-Century American Poets*.

Viereck is much less interested in the ideas he champions than he is in the fact that his championing gets him talked about.

The question of Viereck's journalism is not irrelevant, for a considerable part of his current reputation stems from it. Once the publicist is stripped away, however, Viereck's reputation must rest, I think, on the half-dozen good poems one finds in *Terror and Decorum*. These are poems to be respected, but one pays them no respect in swallowing the blurbs of the pamphleteer-in-residence who time and again badgers the poet into writing inanities, as has happened almost without exception in Viereck's new book, *Strike through the Mask*.

In his most successful poems ("Hard Times" and "Crass Times" are two of the most convincing) the power of Viereck's language is irresistible. Like Williams, though not for the same reason, Viereck is a poet difficult to quote from; his poems are generally built on long chords of sound and meaning that can only be taken as a whole. Part I of "Crass Times" (from *Terror and Decorum*) may, however, be cited as a specimen passage of Viereck at his best:

*The music of the dignity of souls*  
Molds every note I hum and hope to write.  
I long to tell the Prince of aureoles—  
Groper-in-clay and breather-into-dolls,  
Kindler of suns, and chords that span our  
poles—  
What goading reverence His tunes incite.  
Then lips whose only sacrament is speech,  
Sing Him the way the old unbaptized night  
Dreads and  
needs and  
lacks and  
loves the light.  
May yet when slick with poise I overreach,  
When that high ripening slowness I impeach,  
Awe of that music jolt me home contrite:  
*O harshness of the dignity of souls.*

This is an effective example of Viereck's ability to revivify the vocabularies

of theology and humanism. We may also note here other characteristics of Viereck's style: the lingering over the strong round "oles" rhyme (interspersed with the sharper "ite" and "each" rhymes), the emphatically measured-out incantatory line with practically no caesura but with a full stop at the end, the regular use of alliteration and repetition to assist the desired emphatic beat, the strict metrical regularity, the antiphonal opposition of groups of lines—all are typical of his best manner.

The worst of Viereck remains, as always, noise. It seems nearly incredible that the poet who wrote "Crass Times" should also write these lines as an elegy to Hart Crane:

Hey, Hart, can you hear me?  
Hey Hart don't jump.

There are other postures, too, in which Viereck simply contaminates the page. Sometimes it is in his attempts at a guffaw that doesn't come off, as in "Don't Look Now," sometimes it is in an attempt to be more graceful than he knows how to be, as in "Love Song to Eohippus." Wherever Viereck succeeds he seems to succeed by sincerity, wherever he fails he seems to fail as the result of a false posture.

With his infallibly dull prose flair for merely decorative paradox, Viereck calls his approach "Manhattan classicism." I suppose this means Longinus in tweeds over the Martinis. The trouble is, this Longinus can't always hold his liquor. But, drunk or sober, it is a traditional reality (as distinct from the Stevens-Williams sense of reality) that Viereck seeks to report. The poem for Viereck is not an aesthetic construction: it depends heavily on traditional philosophy and ethics for its orientation. At times, in fact, it becomes simply a rhetorical restatement of traditional philosophic

views. For all his gesticulating, it is in the house of classic man that Viereck would like to live.

Gwendolyn Brooks is also a traditionalist. Unlike Peter Viereck, she is never offensive. Also unlike Peter Viereck, she is never compelling. Nor can I find a realized core of perception in her work. Her traditionalism is as often as not a mere poesy:

Take such rubies as ye list.  
Suit to any bonny ends.  
Sheathe, expose, but never shove.  
Prune, curb, mute: but put above.

This is certainly undistinguished diction and movement. Unhappily, it is also reasonably typical.

A few pages later we find a more interesting poem opening with:

A light and diplomatic bird  
Is lenient in my window tree.

This, on the other hand, is charming. The unusual and right usage of "lenient" makes a moment of real pleasure, further delighted by the rightness with which the overtones of "lenient" consort with the overtones of "diplomatic" and "light." This is well seen and well phrased. But two stanzas later we find:

He can abash his barmecides;  
The fantoccini of his range  
Pass over.

And here we are back at failure. This is language thrown together out of exuberance, without self-criticism. How is the reader to fit "barmecides" and "fantoccini" into anything but a discord? What have either of them to do with the bird? One suspects that the ear is nearly deaf to overtone, that Miss Brooks is conducting a vocabulary-building exercise.

Still, there remain the opening lines, as well as one or two points in *Annie Allen*, where one is convinced that it would be worth this poet's while to learn her art.

For there is gift here, though rarely shown, and there is always an engaging personality. But these are scattering poems, unrealized and unmade as yet. And, dangerously, the critics have been too kind: Miss Brooks will have to be far more demanding of herself than her critics have been if she is to develop what is promising in her eye, mind, and manner of speaking.

This has, necessarily, been a hasty survey. With every wish to walk the middle of the line I have drawn, I cannot avoid a feeling that "bric-a-brac" may have been given the better of this presentation. I see two reasons why this should be nearly inevitable here. First, our bric-a-brac poets are men of senior achievement, whereas our subjects poets are young and relatively unaccomplished. Had the chance of prize-awarding brought Frost into the discussion, for instance, subjects poetry could have been documented more winningly. Second, I have long sensed a prejudice against bric-a-brac among academic readers, and I have sought to oppose it.

Certainly, whatever the comparative merits of these poets, valuable poetry is being written today on both sides of the line. Unfortunately, one too often meets a tendency for one side to be contemptuous of the other. The ridiculousness of this attitude should be self-apparent: when catholicity disappears from poetry, only the partisanship of nonsense can follow. But, beyond all transient parties and pressure groups, poetry will continue to explore and to make palpable more facets of experience than anyone or any group can legitimatize in advance. Those who care for poetry will not arbitrarily limit the poet to a way of seeing to which they happen to be accustomed, for in following the good poet into his own way of seeing one finds he has re-entered himself.

## A.F. 632 to 1984

GAYLORD C. LE ROY<sup>1</sup>

BOTH Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* are books designed more to horrify than to entertain. Both portray tomorrow's society as one in which people will be conditioned, standardized, and dehumanized; in which the past will have been obliterated; in which reading and thinking will be suspect activities and individuality a crime. So much do the books have in common in the fears that inspired them, in the fears they inspire, as to call for some comment on their meaning for our time. But first, one or two further comparisons.

Huxley's book is the better written of the two. Huxley's invention is so fertile and spontaneous as to make Orwell's story appear plodding and mechanical by comparison. Orwell never approaches Huxley's mastery of phrase. But Orwell's is the timelier book—as it well might be, incorporating as it does the experience of the almost two decades since *Brave New World* was written in 1932. In *Brave New World* the standardizing force (apart from conditioning) is pleasure—the lowest common denominator of pleasure: sex, soma, and the feelies. In *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* terror, not pleasure, compels conformity. (Here we see the first fruit of the last two decades.) Huxley's people stay in their rut because it is easy, Orwell's because they are bludgeoned. Again, there is no hint of war in *Brave New World*. In *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* war is part of the permanent

and necessary state of affairs; "War Is Peace," as the slogan says. Huxley's dictatorship, again, is one of brains, Orwell's of power. The ruling class of *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* was originally the intelligentsia or managerial class, but it has consolidated its power through brutality rather than through brains.

In still another way Orwell reflects the experience of the last two decades. A main theme of his book (for which there is no parallel in Huxley) is the twentieth-century assault on the reason. Oceania has brought to a fine point the art of doublethink—the ability, that is, to keep contradictory ideas in the mind at the same time and to believe both. Newspeak, Oceania's new language, keeps people from thinking certain thoughts by narrowing the range of available words, and so of concepts. Oceania's slogans give evidence of this corrosion of the mind. *Brave New World's* slogans—"Community," "Identity," "Stability"—are bad enough, but they are wholly rational. Oceania's slogans—"War Is Peace," "Freedom Is Slavery," "Ignorance Is Strength"—suggest all the horrors of the modern attack on the rational mind.

The potential individualist is worse off in Oceania than in *Brave New World*. Bernard Marx and the Savage go some distance in developing independent thought and action in *Brave New World*. Winston Smith, in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, trapped by the telescreen, the hidden microphone, the thought police, and stool pigeons, moves inexorably toward

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the vast, mechanized, superefficient concentration camp. In the sense Orwell gives us of the private person's helplessness in the grip of a vengeful, mechanized society, he reminds one of that other novelist who portrays with such power the predicament of the totalitarian victim, Franz Kafka.

The treatment of sex is oddly different in the two books. In *Brave New World* "everyone belongs to everyone else," as the conditioning loud-speakers have taught each child in his sleep. Between desire and fulfilment there is no barrier; girls are taught to carry their Malthusian belts at all times. In Oceana, on the other hand, sex is a crime—save for minimum indulgence for procreation's sake. Sex is taboo in Oceana because it gives one a kind of independence of the state and even more because dammed-up sexual energy contributes to the politically necessary war hysteria. The sex theme is handled brilliantly in both books, but some readers will feel, nevertheless, that it is in the treatment of sex that each author most greatly strains the delicately balanced assembly of hypotheses by which fictions of this sort are sustained. Huxley's aim, as was said, is to show that when the object of desire is achieved easily, it loses its value. He does this effectively, and, furthermore, in developing the paradoxical morality that makes indiscriminate sexual indulgence a social obligation and maternity and romantic love matters for embarrassment, Huxley's comic genius is at its freest and most delightful. Yet it is in this part of *Brave New World* that the reader is most aware of those false simplifications—the theory, for instance, that it is only the obstacle that gives value to the goal—which point forward to the intellectual retreats of Huxley's later career. As for Orwell's book, the fanaticism with which

the authorities of Oceana hunt down mild sexual indulgence puts about as great a strain on credibility as anything in the book—especially since, the reader will think, a dictatorship of the sort Orwell describes would be likely to encourage sexual indulgence as a way of making tolerable lives strained to the breaking point by war, terror, hate, and the artificially stimulated adulation of Big Brother. It may be, however, that we should think of sex in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* as a kind of literary symbol. In describing the ban on sex, it may be that Orwell is showing, by means of a symbolic technique, how his dictatorship burns out the vital forces of life.

A further difference between the two books is that everything in *Brave New World* is superefficient, while in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* machines break down, tobacco falls out of cigarettes, and houses collapse. This idea of a utopia in breakdown is one of Orwell's most brilliant conceptions. The conception could hardly have been developed before the last two decades.

The most striking likeness between the two books is that neither contains within itself any mitigation of the terrors it is designed to inspire. Huxley's book assumes that we are moving toward a society of delectable and ignominious softness, Orwell's that we are moving toward a superstate based on mechanization, terror, and a corrupted intellect, and both books assume that there is nothing that we can do about it. Curiously enough, Huxley makes exactly this objection in the Preface to the 1946 edition of *Brave New World*. The "most serious defect" of the book, Huxley says here, is that it presents the reader with only two alternatives, the "insane life of Utopia" and the primitive existence of an Indian village, both of them equally abhorrent. He

should have offered "a third alternative," Huxley says—in the form of a community where "economics would be decentralist and Henry-Georgian, politics Kropotkinesque and co-operative. Science and technology would be used as though, like the Sabbath, they had been made for man, not (as at present and still more so in the *Brave New World*) as though man were to be adapted and enslaved to them."

Not every reader will feel that the precise alternative sketched here would have benefited *Brave New World*, but Huxley is nevertheless right in describing it as a weakness in the book that it presented no practical alternative to its fearful vision of a pneumatic utopia. Perhaps the main weakness of both books, in fact, lies in the sense they convey that the drift toward the terrifying vistas they present is irresistible. The view might be taken, to be sure, that to sketch out a future as terrible as these is to take the most effective action against the trends in our own time that are carrying us in the direction the books describe. Huxley and Orwell, according to this view, may be regarded as using satire as a warning against the trends whose apotheosis they portray in their respective books.

But do we in fact, while we read these books, have a sense that we are being confronted with a warning that requires us to take appropriate action? Do not the books read rather as nightmarish prophecies of the horrors toward which certain trends in our own time must inevitably lead us? Do we while reading, in other words, experience that bracing of the will which results from entirely sound satire, or do we, on the other hand, find in them confirmation for whatever tendency we may have to acquiesce in the pessimism which constitutes so conspicuous a trend in contemporary thought? The answer, I

think, is that both books tend, on the whole, to strengthen the belief, becoming now so widespread, that nothing can be done to salvage modern man from the mounting crisis of the times and that, in the words of Cyril Connolly, "it is closing time in the gardens of the West." Huxley himself was evidently not satisfied that the satiric form of *Brave New World* was in itself sufficient to establish a sound moral attitude toward the subject matter, since in the later Preface he indicated that a different alternative should have had a place in the body of the satire. If in *Brave New World* we have the sense that the trends being satirized are irresistible, this is even more true, many readers must feel, of *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. The impression this book gives to such readers is that in the constitution of man the will to ravage and destroy is so insatiable that once we have acquired the means, as we now have, it is inevitable that sooner or later we will blast and crush the freedom and joy of the human spirit; lust for power, coupled with ample command of the means to satisfy this lust, will sooner or later transform the fabric of civilization into the universal concentration camp of the police state. What we sense in this book, in a word, is a distrust of man as absolute as was the distrust in *Animal Farm* of the possibility of any kind of amelioration in the means of producing and distributing wealth.

If this reading of the book is correct, if the satire of *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* reads not as a call to action but as the story, in breath-taking hyperbole, of the road down which current trends must inevitably take us, then it may be said that in this very acquiescence, in the absence of any hint, such as Huxley feels he ought to have introduced into *Brave New*

*World*, as to how these trends may be resisted, lies the book's major weakness. The decline of culture has gone too far for us to applaud without qualification a book whose effect is to accustom the reader to the idea that collapse is inevitable. The reviews that heralded Orwell's book as a profound revelation of the truth for our time perhaps did the reader a disservice. To be sure, the book must be read for its astounding portrayal of the horrors that beset the path we may

yet take. But if the reader's response is to be healthy, he should be informed that the tone of the book springs largely from the disbelief in man that characterizes the disillusioned radical and that (without resorting to any "I am the master of my fate" poses) we can still regard as pusillanimous the assumption that man lacks the power to meet and master the forces emanating from within him which now so frighteningly threaten his humanity.

## *In Defense of Hamlet*

ROBERT PALFREY UTTER, JR.<sup>1</sup>

HAMLET has been subjected to more analyses than almost any other character in literature. In general, there are two types of theories about him: (1) those that hold he was suffering from some sort of malady, either outright insanity or a neurosis, weakness, or "tragic flaw"; and (2) those that hold he was a genius and a hero, an unusually gifted and admirable person who was put to a supreme test of character and in the end triumphed over the moral problem he was confronted with, thus winning a very real spiritual victory in the face of death.

Professor Wagenknecht in the January, 1949, issue of *College English* ("The Perfect Revenge—Hamlet's Delay: A Reconsideration") seems to belong to the latter school. The reply by Ralph A. McCanse in the May, 1949, issue quite definitely expresses the view that there was something pathologically wrong with Hamlet. If, as has often been said, there are as many theories of Hamlet as there are readers, may one more reader venture an opinion? It is put forth not to refute

but to supplement what has already been written, not to bring out new points but to consider some old points in a new light and thereby to reevaluate them and reorient ourselves in Shakespeare's world.

It seems to me that there is much to be said for the theory that Hamlet should be thought of more as a hero full of many desirable qualities than as a psychopath or weak-willed, incompetent dreamer. Wagenknecht has on the whole taken this view. I feel, however, that more could be said than he does in extenuation of Hamlet's delay in killing Claudius. There is an ethical consideration which I feel Wagenknecht does not give enough weight to but which I believe is the main point of the play.

Wagenknecht says, "It seems clear that Hamlet never really doubts the righteousness of the revenge-ethic." Might not Hamlet's doubt of the righteousness of the revenge ethic be precisely the point Shakespeare was making in the play? Obvious as Shakespeare was in putting over some points (such as the depravity of Claudius, for example), he

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could be extremely subtle about others (such as the play on the idea of the wise man and the fool in *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, and *Lear*). Perhaps his most important ideas are wrapped in the very core of the play, as it were, only to be found by penetrating and perseverant study. Might it not be Shakespeare's central thought that Hamlet is torn between the lower and the higher ethic? It may be he did not wish to appear too obvious about his moral, since the majority of the people in his audience probably were not ready for the idea that personal revenge should be superseded by something higher. And so he may have implied his deeper ethical considerations for the judicious to infer as they would and yet have clothed his play in externals that looked like the popular blood-and-thunder ethic of the day. Yet that blood-and-thunder medieval manner of living may have been precisely what he was criticizing.

Is there any evidence that Shakespeare was concerned with the criticism of medieval behavior patterns? There would seem to be much evidence that he was, that he looked at many medieval customs not approvingly but with the eye of the satirist and critic. Shakespeare lived in a time of swift change, just as we do. He stood at the turning point between the medieval and the modern. He saw the medieval ways beginning to crumble and certain new social patterns beginning to emerge. He did not fully know what would emerge, any more than we know fully what future is shaping from our present, yet his insight is amazing. He is incredibly modern in some of his attitudes. His bold juxtaposition of Hotspur, the medieval man of chivalry and honor, with Falstaff, the modern mocker, skeptic, and *bon vivant*, shows that he was very much aware of the change that was taking place. In *Romeo*

and *Juliet* he shows unforgettably the evils of medieval feuds, street brawls, and duels. In *Twelfth Night* the duel is reduced to a farce. In *Hamlet* the duel undoes the knot of the tragedy and plunges all the principals to their doom. It is significant that in 1613 James I issued "An Edict and Censure against Private Combats," or duels, a fact which shows that the problem of dueling and of private revenge must have been growing more and more acute and that there must have been a gathering sentiment against it, at least among the more enlightened men of the time. Shakespeare was clearly one of these men.

Shakespeare's attitude toward war is brought out in the scene in *1 Henry IV* in which Falstaff defends his ragged army. There is a grimly modern ring in the words "Food for powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better." Only one who saw through the glamour and glory of war to the suffering and misery underneath could write such words. There is a serious undertone to the humor of this satire, and that undertone is really the whole tragic story of the Wars of the Roses as told in the history plays. There the consequences of Bolingbroke's usurpation are unfolded in all their bloody ramifications, culminating in the bloodiest story of them all, *Richard III*. The idea of the wrong man on the throne, the tyrant usurping the throne from the rightful king or heir, is another major theme that Shakespeare brings out in many plays. *Macbeth*, the history plays from *Richard II* through *Richard III*, and *Hamlet* all play on this medieval abuse in various ways, and all bring out the terrible consequences of such situations.

We may say that there are five major themes on medieval life that Shakespeare is concerned with: (1) usurpation of a

throne (*Macbeth*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, and *Hamlet*); (2) dueling, street brawling, and feuds (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*); (3) overzealous pursuit and defense of honor (the Hotspur-Falstaff relationship in *1 Henry IV*); (4) factions and nations going to war with each other over trifling disputes (*1* and *2 Henry IV*; *Henry V*; *1*, *2*, and *3 Henry VI*); and (5) the committing of intemperate and hasty revenge (*Hamlet*). These five problems are closely intertwined, as can be seen by the fact that feuds between factions are treated in one way in *Romeo and Juliet* and in another in the plays dealing with the Wars of the Roses. The close relationship of these themes can be seen by the fact that the theme of revenge as treated in *Hamlet* is made to touch upon and involve the four others mentioned above, as well as others not mentioned. Thus in *Hamlet* Shakespeare has drawn all the problems together into a single focus.

In the plays cited above we see that Shakespeare felt that the medieval notions about all five problems were obsolescent and in need of change from an emotional, childish attitude to a more thoughtful, adult one. Shakespeare shows the evils of all five types of behavior so clearly, not only in objective terms, but also in subjective, psychological ones—in terms, that is, of the toll they take of the individual's life and mind and heart—that we cannot help concluding that he felt deeply about them and brooded upon the possibility of stimulating men to see the folly of such acts and turn to more rational and civilized ways of behavior.

With these preliminary considerations, we can now turn to *Hamlet*. Shakespeare shows us at the outset that Hamlet is an outstandingly moral man. He alone of all people in the court objects to his mother's marriage on moral grounds. Whatever

our personal views of such an objection may be, I think we must take it as a postulate of the play that the marriage was immoral and that Hamlet alone was sensitive enough to see it as such. Hamlet alone of all the court objects to the heavy drinking. The play is done in bright light and heavy shadow, bringing out the deep contrast between Hamlet's sensitivity and the dull, brutalized living of the court around him. Shakespeare seems to be laying down certain fundamental assumptions about Hamlet's character: that he is head and shoulders above his age in moral stature and that he is sensitive about moral issues that others are insensitive to. He thus stands alone, a man ahead of his time, as Shakespeare was ahead of his.

In the light of this moral quality of Hamlet we can understand why Hamlet sees more in the revenge problem than anyone else would. We know that Laertes sees nothing in it beyond killing the killer. This contrast between Laertes and Hamlet when each is confronted by fundamentally the same problem is one of the main points of the play and serves to bring out in a subtle fashion the moral issue. That Hamlet sees more in revenge than personal retaliation, the "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" philosophy, may be seen in his reaction to the problem after he has had a few minutes to think it over. After the Ghost has gone, after he has vowed to forget all else but the Ghost's commands, after he has made Horatio and Marcellus swear to secrecy, after he has warned them not to give away his secret in case he feigns madness, after all is said and done, he muses to himself:

The time is out of joint—O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right!

We see from this that he desires to do a great deal more than merely "sweep to

his revenge." He here shows again what, in the emotionalism of the Ghost's first revelation, had been momentarily clouded, namely, his intensely moral nature. He wants to set the time right, but he does not know how to do so. His whole upbringing has trained him to admire men of action, such as his father, Fortinbras, Claudius, and Laertes. But his deeper inclination is to admire quite another type of man, the thinker, the man of moral idealism. He transfers all his idealism to his deceased father, who, when alive, was not really an idealist at all but an intemperate man of action, a warrior, a man of his age, a medievalist pure and simple. His ideal is thus confused by the discrepancy between the ideal that is struggling into being in his own heart and the kind of life his father and friends actually lived.

It should be noted that none of the men of action, neither the elder Hamlet nor Fortinbras nor Claudius nor Laertes, ever tried to do anything merely because it was "right." The ideal of setting the time right belongs solely to Hamlet, the moral man, the thinker, the idealist. Since he expresses this ideal early in the play, we must take it as the central ideal of his life and actions. The importance of the above-quoted lines in the evaluation of Hamlet's character cannot be overstated. His desire to right the wrong sets him apart from Fortinbras and Laertes, who desire merely to retaliate in kind for an injury done their fathers.

Later in the play, because of his father's training and his general environment, Hamlet condemns himself for not acting and seems to admire the kind of men Fortinbras and Laertes are. But Shakespeare does not admire them. Laertes is Shakespeare's symbol of what happens to the man of action when he does not think. His intentions are com-

pletely turned awry by cleverer men. And Fortinbras is unmistakably satirized in Hamlet's soliloquy in Act IV, scene 4, when Hamlet speaks of him as a "delicate and tender prince, / Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd / Makes mouths at the invisible event . . ."; and again: "Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument / But greatly to find quarrel in a straw / When honor's at the stake." Fortinbras' army is described as going "to their graves like beds." All this pomp and circumstance is "even for an egg-shell."

Thus, even while he condemns himself by the standards of the man of action, he condemns the man of action. This soliloquy is the key to the whole play, for in it Hamlet shows the struggle taking place within him. We see dramatically presented the two standards. This marching army that forms the background and accompaniment of the soliloquy symbolizes the whole world of false values in which men will perform heroic deeds for no worthy cause. Hamlet in the foreground symbolizes the thinker who sees such causes for action "as would make the angels weep," namely, treachery, crime, faithlessness, the human soul blackened with lust and murder and hypocrisy; and yet because of the very soul-shattering seriousness of his cause no act in the world could do justice to Hamlet's revelation. He is literally stunned by his vision of truth into inaction.

The struggle in Hamlet goes on without his full understanding of its meaning, just as is the case with most of us when we are gripped by some inner struggle. By implication, however, Shakespeare makes the meaning clear to us. It is a struggle between the lower morality, represented by everyone else in the play, and the higher morality, represented by Hamlet's higher nature. The struggle is

made realistic and human by the fact that at one point Hamlet almost loses it by giving way to his lower nature. I refer to the episodes following the play before the King. Hamlet is so enraged by the new proof of the King's guilt that he loses his temper and his head. He speaks a soliloquy at the end of that scene (Act III, scene 2) that is not characteristic of him. "Now could I drink hot blood," he says in bloodthirsty rage. Never before has he expressed such readiness for murder. Outrage at the crime of his uncle he has expressed many times, but never such direct blood-lust as this. This is the thirst for revenge that Laertes feels later, the desire simply to kill the killer of a loved one. It is quite understandable, in the sense that it is quite natural to feel so; but in our modern society we make some attempt to set it aside for a more impersonal social justice. In Hamlet's society hardly any such attempt was made. In Shakespeare's society the beginnings of modern social justice were barely sprouting. *Hamlet* is a document recording those beginnings. This soliloquy represents a fall from an ideal that was beginning to emerge in Shakespeare's day, an ideal that Hamlet was striving to realize. The consequences of the fall were serious.

As a result of this retrogression into the current medieval barbarism, Hamlet makes two mistakes. The first is mistaking Claudius' attitude of prayer for real prayer. Regardless of how we interpret Hamlet's expressed desire to damn Claudius' soul eternally, his belief that Claudius would go to heaven rather than to hell if he killed him at this moment was, on Hamlet's own assumptions, a mistake. We, the audience, know this because we know that Claudius' "thoughts remain below," since he cannot repent. He is not really in a spiritual mood at the time. Therefore we know that Hamlet

made a serious mistake in his interpretation of the hidden springs of Claudius' conduct, a mistake not characteristic of him.

His second mistake has more serious consequences. It is the killing of Polonius behind the arras, a double mistake, for he both kills the wrong man and kills at the wrong time. Neither Hamlet nor the people of Denmark are ready for the killing of Claudius yet: Hamlet because he would be killing not in a spirit of justice but in a spirit of hatred, and the people because they know nothing as yet of Claudius' guilt. This double mistake underlines his mood of personal hatred, in which he does not consider the consequences. The consequences in this case are very nearly disastrous for Hamlet. The mistake nearly costs him his life, and he escapes only with the aid of divine Providence, as he very carefully explains to Horatio. Shakespeare is showing us the consequences of acting without thinking, without idealism, or without a clear inspiration from God.

Hamlet's solution is a spiritual one. He learns resignation to God, to a higher will, a higher morality, or, as he calls it, "Providence." Shakespeare makes Hamlet's new philosophy abundantly clear in the last act, in which Hamlet twice speaks eloquently of our being guided by God in moments of darkness when our own planning fails, of being resigned to whatever God has in store for us. Such philosophy is a new philosophy for Hamlet. Never before has he expressed any such view. It is not fatalism, for fatalism is a bitter and antagonistic acceptance of the universe as a machine of blind chance. Hamlet uses the words "divinity" and "Providence," both of which imply a cosmic mind of benevolence and intelligence. Hamlet's attitude expresses joy for the first time. He feels a certain

peace and at-one-ment with the universe. His struggles are over.

Thus, though Hamlet dies, he wins the struggle. After many struggles, after being cast down into the pit of bestial unreason and hatred, after being cast forth on the ocean to die, after going down into the despair of the grave, he eventually wins to the other side of the darkness and finds light and peace. His higher self finally wins in the struggle over his lower self, a battle which possibly is symbolized by the duel with Laertes. The "spiritual uplift" referred to by Wagenknecht is precisely this: that Hamlet's higher spiritual nature vanquishes his lower nature of animal and personal passions. He learns resignation to the principle of justice in the universe.

In support of such an interpretation, let me point out that, not only dramatically, as Wagenknecht brings out, but also practically, Hamlet could not have killed the King before he did. For it is not until precisely that moment when Hamlet did kill him that the King's guilt is publicly apparent. Before that moment the King's guilty nature is locked in secrecy; everyone regards him with the awe and homage due a monarch. But now suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, his murderous character stands revealed to the public gaze: Laertes is dying, Gertrude has died after having blamed "the drink" which Claudius a moment before offered to Hamlet, Laertes as he dies lays the blame for all these deaths upon Claudius and informs everyone that Hamlet, too, is dying. This, then, is Hamlet's opportunity to kill the King without blame to himself. Had he killed him at any time before this, everyone would have looked upon Hamlet as the murderer instead of Claudius. Hamlet could never have proved Claudius' guilt; instead, he would have been the guilty one.

Nothing would have been righted in any sense of the word; instead, wrongs would have been multiplied.

The philosophy of the people of that day concerning kingship is expressed by Rosencrantz in Act III, scene 3, when he supports Claudius' regime by saying that the King's welfare is the welfare of the state and therefore that anything that threatens the King's personal life threatens the public life as a whole. The irony that Shakespeare probably intended in this passage is that, while the philosophy would be considered true by Shakespeare's audiences, the application of it to Claudius would be felt to be mistaken because he is not the real king. He himself has destroyed the real king and therefore has committed a profound crime against the state. By this passage Shakespeare makes it clear that, since Claudius has all the homage due to the real king, this philosophy, true enough in itself, would have been mistakenly used to justify the prosecution of Hamlet for treason had he killed Claudius without objective proof of his guilt. By this passage Shakespeare also shows us how very deep Claudius' guilt goes; that is, he tells us here that Claudius is guilty not only of a brother's murder but also of a deep injury to the whole state, since what injures the monarch injures the state. It is extremely ironic that the criminal guilty of this state crime himself invokes in self-protection the very principle that ought to be used to bring him to justice.

Thus, by the continual interplay of true and false, Shakespeare brings out the all but insuperable difficulties that confront Hamlet and creates the central ironies of the drama. This tightly woven irony about the philosophy of kingship, I might add, was probably far more obvious to the Elizabethan audiences than it

is to us, a theory which, if true, perhaps explains why the interpretations of Hamlet as "weak" are fairly modern.

*Hamlet* is an extraordinarily complex play. It has been made more complex than perhaps the text warrants by conflicting interpretations. Could we find an

interpretation that would bring many of the difficulties together, much of the bewilderment that the inexperienced student finds with the play might be obviated. It is hoped that the present interpretation may help to reconcile at least some of the conflicting theories.

## Emily Dickinson—Mystic Poet?

SISTER MARY HUMILIATA, I.H.M.<sup>1</sup>

OF ALL the terms in the vocabulary of the average critical writer, perhaps "mystic" and "mysticism" are the most misused. Probably the ambiguity surrounding the usage is inevitably attendant upon the borrowing of a term from one field for use in another; however, to anyone with the slightest respect for the theological definitions of these words, the lack of discrimination with which they are employed in literary criticism is appalling. Poetry which evades the stereotyped classifications either by reason of its intellectual complexity or, on the other hand, by reason of its vague elusiveness is catalogued as "mystical"; its authors become thereby "mystics" or, at least, "mystic poets." The difficulties of understanding religious poetry and the scarcity of it in modern times are apparently reasons sufficient for placing such work under the title of "mystical" without further analysis.

It is therefore not at all surprising to discover that Emily Dickinson has been called a "mystic poet" by many of her critics. Too often, of course, Miss Dickinson's work has been subjected to those commentators who are intrigued with the romantic biography, charmed with the love poetry, but somewhat baffled by

the more significant poems, and thus the term "mystic" has been called into play. One can be almost certain that in enthusiastic biographies or sketches like that of Macgregor Jenkins' *Emily Dickinson, Friend and Neighbor*, there will be passages such as the following:

She was sensitized to life in a different key, the whole cadence of her being was quicker, she felt acutely things that were but dull intimations to most people. She responded to a wholly different set of stimuli and her reactions were individual reactions, not herd or clan reactions.<sup>2</sup>

This is preceded by a reference to the "mystic" as one of a series of epithets.<sup>3</sup>

It is rather disconcerting, however, to find a seriously intentioned biographer, George Frisbie Whicher, stating of the elusive Emily:

... Her delight was to test all conceivable points of view in turn. At any moment she was ready to acknowledge in herself the claims of rationalist and mystic, Pyrrhonist and Transcendentalist. A mood of faith that possessed her in the morning might become matter of delicate mockery in the afternoon, a piercing grief could be sublimated overnight into a rapture of spiritual purgation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.), p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> *This Was a Poet* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 305.

<sup>4</sup> Immaculate Heart College, Hollywood, Calif.

Even to those who are able to reconcile the contradictions of the last statement, such an analysis presents difficulties.

However, the tendency of the more staid literary historians to carry on the tradition that Miss Dickinson's poetry is mystical in nature has been not only amazing in its universality but bewildering in its variety of forms. For example, Kreymborg tells us in his *History of American Poetry*:

If Emily Dickinson is comparable with Blake in her dynamic mysticism, with Emerson in her intoxicated independence, and with the Elizabethans in her daring range of imagery, she is also fascinating as the first and best of American women poets.<sup>5</sup>

Walter Fuller Taylor states in his *History of American Letters*: "Upon her [Emily Dickinson's] mysticism there rests unquestionably the stamp of Emerson."<sup>6</sup>

As a matter of American literary history, it is perhaps Emily Dickinson's sharp divergence from the paths of her predecessors which has puzzled these various critics. Even a superficial study of American poetry will convince one that Miss Dickinson, who was unable to accept Calvinism from her schooldays, would not be satisfied with the clichés of a moderate Unitarianism such as Bryant professed. Her poetry indicates a capability of logical consideration of fundamental truths, and her self-chosen isolation gave her opportunity for such thought. Her continued questionings of the accepted beliefs would have made her a stranger to those who received gratefully the moralistic generalities of Unitarianism.

On the other hand, the perspicacious Emily was not befogged by cloudy Emersonianism.

It is becoming customary for those who desire to prove the Emerson-Emily alliance to quote stanzas of similarity from one or the other of these poets and to defy identification of the author by all except the specialist.<sup>7</sup> It should, of course, be unnecessary to point out that a similarity in sources of poetic style does not lead inevitably to an identity of philosophical system. An examination of the body of Miss Dickinson's nature poetry leaves one with no evidence that she was a pantheist; rather is there constant reference to God as the Creator and Ruler of creation in the orthodox Christian sense. To ally her independence of mind with the doctrine of "self-reliance" as preached by Emerson is only to show a lack of understanding of that specious teaching.

What is striking in the work of Emily Dickinson as one searches it for her beliefs is the frank, thoughtful, sometimes playful, but always direct approach which she makes to the problems of life, death, and immortality. Her concern with these problems and her expression of the judgments she has made in her own highly individualistic idiom has probably led to the classification of much of her poetry as mystical.

A brief summary of the principles of mysticism as found in the mystical writers of all times will assist in ascertaining what qualities are, in general, characteristic of their work. The application of these principles to the work of Miss Dickinson will not lead to incontestable conclusions, but the process may be valuable in indicating the position of this great lyricist in our literature.

Dr. Joseph Collins, in his study *Christian Mysticism in the Elizabethan Age*,

<sup>5</sup> (New York: Tudor Pub. Co., 1934), p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> (New York: American Book Co., 1936), p. 281.

<sup>7</sup> Percy H. Boynton, *Literature and American Life* (New York: Ginn & Co., 1931), p. 696; cf. also Whicher, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

after a survey of the mystical literature of all ages and places states:

... The writings of the mystics, irrespective of time or country, show forth a number of common features. They reveal an attempt on the part of the individual soul to arrive at a self-proposed Object, conceived as apart from itself in terms of the Absolute and final Reality. They also indicate an enjoyment of communion or intimate union with the Object, this Reality, this Divine Being, a union commonly transient, even momentary in character, which brings the soul to further longing, to greater purification, and to a deeper contemplation.<sup>8</sup>

The same author goes on to point out that contemplation is the basis of all mysticism, and it is to prepare for this contemplation that the mystics "take up ascetic exercises of purification; and during the course of contemplation, experience the inexplicable and indescribable joys of the mystics."<sup>9</sup> Of the writings of the mystics, some common deductions are thus made:

... The literature of the mystics is the literature of their methodology. They speak for themselves, not indeed so much about union with the Absolute, as of the necessary preludes to this union; not in analysis of the psychological or ontological aspects of spiritual communion, so much as in an arrangement of veritable rungs of the spiritual ladder by which the soul ascends to perfection.<sup>10</sup>

Helen C. White, in her scholarly research on *The Mysticism of William Blake*, comes to conclusions remarkably similar; in describing mystics in general she says:

Divers rare and beautiful gifts of mind and spirit do they possess, but the heart of their genius is to be found in these three things: a deep and immediate consciousness of the reality of the spirit, a rare ability to concentrate all upon one end, and an ethical strenuousness that is the inevitable and logical outcome in such spirits of their way of looking at the world.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to the idea of purification which occurs in almost all mystic writings, Miss White states that "all mystic effort, both eastern and western, requires not only strenuous discipline, but also a very real surrender of self."<sup>12</sup>

Such summaries must, of necessity, represent only the bare outlines of the ideas of mysticism which have been represented in writings throughout the history of its literature. It is useful, also, to note the essential nature of the Christian mystic as distinct from the non-Christian mystic. The three main stages of all mysticism, purification, contemplation, and union, are developed into the three "ways" of the Christian mystic: purgative, illuminative, and unitive. Essentially, however, Christian mysticism differs from non-Christian mysticism chiefly through the Christian belief in the Incarnation of Christ. The Christian mystic possesses a model, an inspiration, a mediator, and an object of his personal love in the Person of Jesus Christ. Further, the purificatory process in Christian mysticism is not that of the Platonic ascent, which was "rarely more than a freedom from the senses to ensure that virtue and wisdom necessary for intellectual contemplation and ascent to the simple purity of the Absolute."<sup>13</sup> For the Christian mystic holds the doctrine of sin, and he is intensely concerned with his personal guilt. Sin, as related to the Incarnation and the Redemption, inspires in him a sense not only of shame but of sorrow and of love as well.

With these ideas in mind, one returns to the poetry of Emily Dickinson. It is the relation of her soul to what she con-

<sup>8</sup> "University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature," No. 23 (1927), p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>10</sup> Collins, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

ceived as Absolute Reality which must occupy us first. If we may except a few flippant references, the poetry seems to manifest a sincere and abiding faith in God. Her ideas of God appear to fluctuate. At times the childlike attitude prevails, and one has a curious mixture of the sophistication and innocence of Miss Dickinson. A rebellion against modern science justifies the naïveté of these lines:

Perhaps the kingdom of Heaven's changed!  
I hope the children there  
Won't be new-fashioned when I come,  
And laugh at me, and stare!

I hope the father in the skies  
Will lift his little girl,—  
Old-fashioned, naughty, everything,  
Over the stile of pearl!

Disillusionment seeks to express itself in "I meant to have but modest needs," and the same dramatization of herself as a rather independent child is used to express the disappointments of life more directly than the inhibited adult view would permit. Thus the anthropomorphic idea of God occurring in such a poem is not at all, I think, to be taken seriously:

A smile suffused Jehovah's face;  
The cherubim withdrew;  
Grave saints stole out to look at me,  
And showed their dimples, too.

Miss Dickinson's own conception of God is that of a Supreme Power, and apparently her most intimate relations with God are those in which death brings her the poignant realization of His existence. Such a view is supported by two poems which have an intensity of feeling related to personal experience:

I never lost as much but twice,  
And that was in the sod;  
Twice have I stood a beggar  
Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending,  
Reimbursed my store.  
Burglar, banker, father,  
I am poor once more!

and

It was too late for man,  
But early yet for God;  
Creation impotent to help,  
But prayer remained our side.

How excellent the heaven,  
When earth cannot be had;  
How hospitable, then, the face  
Of our old neighbor, God!

One need not doubt that Emily Dickinson believed in God and in the things of the spirit. But that such belief was enriched by contemplative vision of Him, or even a desire for such vision, is very much to be doubted. Death and heaven were the objects of constant speculation by Miss Dickinson, almost to the point of obsession, but the speculation was not that communion with the Divine which the mystic longs for; it was imaginative and entirely based upon sensory experience. Such thoughts are found in "Great streets of silence led away," "I went to heaven,—," "I died for beauty," "Safe in their alabaster chambers," "Ample make this bed," and "What inn is this," as well as many others. Death is seen in these poems as inevitable, its experience indefinable except in terms of what we know on earth. Union with God was to be reserved until death, for there was no venture into the supernatural beyond the realm of ideas for Emily Dickinson. For this reason, probably, there is none of that longing for death which the mystic expresses, the result of his communings with God while he remains in the flesh. One rather feeble expression of the idea occurs in:

If tolling bell I ask the cause,  
"A soul has gone to God,"  
I'm answered in a lonesome tone;  
Is heaven then so sad?

That bells should joyful ring to tell  
 A soul had gone to heaven,  
 Would seem to me the proper way  
 A good news should be given.

To compare this with Augustine's conversation with his mother concerning the kingdom of heaven is to distinguish platitude from passionate longing.

References to Christ in the poems of Emily Dickinson are usually not directly concerned with the Person of Christ but rather with some symbol:

Defeat whets victory, they say;  
 The reefs in old Gethsemane  
 Endear the shore beyond.

There are, however, a few exceptions. A spirit of Christian resignation which joins the individual's sufferings to those of Christ is found in:

I shall know why, when time is over,  
 And I have ceased to wonder why;  
 Christ will explain each separate anguish  
 In the fair schoolroom of the sky.

He will tell me what Peter promised,  
 And I, for wonder at his woe,  
 I shall forget the drop of anguish  
 That scalds me now, that scalds me now.

This is a religious sentiment and a philosophical adjustment of attitude toward suffering. It is not, however, a mystical document; for, while the Christian practices resignation under the burden of grief and trial, the mystic, the saint—enamored of Christ and anxious to resemble Him—begs for the privilege of pain. Thus St. Theresa of Avila could cry out: "To suffer or to die," and three centuries later, St. Thérèse of Lisieux could say: "Like Thee, O Adorable Spouse, I would be scourged, I would be crucified!" And while these wrote of the martyrs with a burning desire to share their sacrifice, Miss Dickinson writes

with strong appreciation but with detachment:

Through the straight pass of suffering  
 The martyrs even trod,  
 Their feet upon temptation,  
 Their faces upon God.

A stately, shriven company;  
 Convulsion playing round,  
 Harmless as streaks of meteor  
 Upon a planet's bound.

Their faith the everlasting troth;  
 Their expectation fair;  
 The needle to the north degree  
 Wades so, through polar air.

So far as one can penetrate the poetic mind and achievement of Emily Dickinson, one finds that her work on themes which might be designated as mystical in nature, her poetry concerned with the Creator, the Redeemer, with death and immortality, are the fruit of a peculiarly deep insight and an intensely emotional nature, but they are not of the body of that literature which is based on the search of the mystic for God and for union with Him. There is faith, certainly, and religious conviction; but nowhere is there that complete dedication to the search for perfection which motivates the mystic.

Mystic literature, as we have seen, is most often concerned with the methodology of mysticism. To describe the unitive way is a task which has proven impossible for most mystics. But the way of purgation, especially, has been fruitful of much of the most graphic of our mystical writing. In both Christian and non-Christian mystical literature there is a deliberate withdrawal from the external things of life in order that attention may be centered on the one thing necessary. In the Christian this purification is motivated by his sense of sin, but it goes much further than the conscien-

tious effort to rid himself of sin which is the duty of every Christian. For the mystic there is a deliberate choice of a difficult self-training, and it is this which constitutes the asceticism of the genuine mystic.

... The world is full of many beautiful and absorbing things that for most men are not only innocent, but profitable; yet they are not what he is seeking. There are people in the world to call forth his great faculty of love... but he is not seeking men. All the things interesting and beautiful and lovable he is gifted to appreciate better than most men; but what he is seeking is incomparably more interesting and beautiful and lovable.... So he leaves the things that warm the lives of other men and goes forth on a lonelier and a stricter way.<sup>14</sup>

In Emily Dickinson's poetry one finds indeed that intense sensitivity to experience which is characteristic of the mystic. Her self-chosen isolation from the world might easily be interpreted as the retirement for contemplation which the mystics practice. But the writing which came out of this solitude does not tell the story of the mystic quest. The motive for the secluded life is blurred a little in the biographies, but for present purposes it is not that life which one wishes to judge for its mystic experience but rather the poetry for its expression thereof. And, as far as one can perceive, the poems seem to evoke the picture of one whose intellectual and emotional equipment for life was extraordinary in perception and depth. There is a deliberate contraction of the circle of experience, but within that circle the ultimate meaning of each act is traced to its end. Experience is related to experience by

metaphor; intense conviction of truth is pointed by personification, but there is never the deliberate putting-by even of the infinitesimal which is the asceticism of the mystic. Miss Dickinson's assertion: "The time to live is frugal, and good as it is a better earth will not quite be this" is not the statement of an ascetic.

Intellectual discipline in Miss Dickinson means precision of thought and adequate relationship of the unique happening to its place in her scheme of things; it is not the withdrawal into contemplation by which the mystic seeks to establish contact with Ultimate Reality. Her immediate goal, poetic expression, is defined in her own lines:

This was a Poet—it is that  
Distils amazing sense  
From ordinary meanings,  
And attars so immense  
From the familiar species  
That perished by the door,  
We wonder it was not ourselves  
Arrested it before.

One searches in vain for the more particular signs of the Christian mystic in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. The expression of personal guilt for sin, the feeling of Christian humility, the symbol of earthly love used to explain the Divine, the ecstatic joy of union, and the utter desolation of the "dark nights of the soul"—all these are recorded in the writings of the great mystics, but they are not found in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Mystical poetry—in the traditional sense, at least—is not Miss Dickinson's poetic gift. To make such a statement is not, however, to deny either her goodness or her genius.

<sup>14</sup> White, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

## *Evolution of a World Literature Course*

PHILIP B. DAGHLIAN AND HORST FRENZ<sup>1</sup>

THE history of the freshman world literature course at Indiana University during the last twenty-five years makes an interesting case study of the different aims, objectives, and methods which have been in vogue during these years. There has been a steady evolutionary process which continues even now, although at this writing an important phase has just been completed.

A course in world literature was first offered by the department of English in 1925 at the request of the dean of what has since become the School of Business, who felt that the necessarily restricted exposure of his students to humane studies should be on a broader base than was possible through the traditional survey of English literature. Six hours of world literature became part of the graduation requirements of the School of Business. Other divisions of the university still required the traditional survey of English literature.

Both courses used conventional anthologies, and both met three hours a week in discussion classes of thirty to forty students per class. Gradually other schools accepted English 103 (world literature) as a fulfilment of the group requirement in literature, and eventually it was accepted throughout the entire university. English majors were urged to take English 102 (English literature), but even this requirement was subject to many exceptions. Last year, either course was acceptable in all parts of the univer-

sity, and the only restriction was that no student could receive credit for both courses.

Up to the middle thirties the annual enrolment in English 103 was approximately half that of English 102. In 1936-37 the enrolments were just about equal, and since that time world literature (English 103) has gradually pulled into the lead (although there were violent fluctuations during the war years) until the relative enrolments were more than reversed in 1949-50, with the world literature course drawing well above twice as many students.

The first change in teaching methods came at the time of the great postwar influx of students, when, because of the shortage of classroom space, one, and later two, large lecture sections were added. These classes, averaging about three hundred students, heard two lectures a week from senior staff members and then broke up into quiz sections of about thirty students, under younger teachers, for the third hour of the course, in which there was theoretically opportunity for discussion and elucidation of points not clear in the lectures, as well as testing and other written work. Of the twenty-six hundred students enrolled in the course in 1946-47, about six hundred and fifty took the lecture course during the first semester, and about four hundred during the second.

Up to this time the anthology was still used exclusively, and the aim of the course varied with the predilections of

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the individual instructors, with perhaps the common notion of giving an approach to literature which transcended national boundaries and at the same time presenting some idea of the development of world culture. In the summer of 1946 a statement of purpose was drawn up for the course in an attempt to formulate some general principles for the guidance of the many new staff members expected in the fall.

This statement tried to achieve a compromise between the double objectives of a history of world culture and a critical introduction to literature. It suggested that the history of culture, as documented by the texts studied, was a necessary study in itself, and that it was also valuable as a form of background knowledge necessary for the fuller understanding of the text. Two elements were recognized in the area of literary appreciation: (1) analytical criticism, involving a careful scrutiny of each text (to the slight degree that this was possible with some of the maimed selections to be found in an anthology), and (2) evaluative criticism, involving the relationship between the literary work and the universal aspects of human life. In practice, these rather ambitious aims were not achieved very successfully, and probably the greater part of the staff continued to present some approximation of a history of culture. Periodic luncheon meetings of the staff for the discussion of problems relating to the course were held at this time, with no more than moderate success.

Increasing dissatisfaction on the part of some teachers with the idea of the anthology led to the establishment, in the fall of 1947, of several experimental sections, which taught only complete works. There was no desire to present a course in great books; rather the idea

was to choose certain complete works which it was hoped would be within the grasp of the students and to present them in their entirety in a way which was of course impossible with an anthology. The main emphasis was on the text being read, and the general aim was to introduce the students to some of the better literary productions of our tradition by means of a close, careful, and leisurely reading of them. Biographical and historical considerations were deliberately left in the background, and the emphasis was put on literary works which would be appealing and teachable to freshman students. From the beginning a few of the complete-books sections have been taught by representatives of the other language departments.

Thus it was possible in 1947-48 to study world literature in three different ways at Indiana University: (1) by means of the conventional discussion class which read the anthology, (2) by means of the lecture-quiz class which used the anthology, and (3) by means of the discussion class reading complete books. From the beginning the students' preferences were made clear at enrolment for each semester. The complete books ranked first, the anthology in discussion class came next, and the lecture-quiz class with the anthology was a poor third, filling its quota only because some students had to enrol last. Soon the lecture-quiz sections were discontinued altogether, while the number of complete-books sections increased steadily. Finally the anthology was dropped, and in 1949-50 all sections of the course used complete books.

The content of this course has varied from semester to semester, as books were added or dropped in accordance with the experience of the staff. The accompanying tabulation shows the syllabus for

1949-50, with the approximate time devoted to the reading of each work. The

## FIRST SEMESTER

	WEEKS
Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> . . . . .	3
Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King, Antigone</i> . . . . .	2½
Chaucer, <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> (trans. Krapp) . . . . .	2½
Dante, <i>Inferno</i> . . . . .	3
Shakespeare, <i>Henry IV, Part I; Antony and Cleopatra</i> . . . . .	3

## SECOND SEMESTER

Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> . . . . .	2½
Voltaire, <i>Candide</i> . . . . .	1
Goethe, <i>Faust, Part I</i> . . . . .	3
Browning, <i>Selected Poems</i> . . . . .	2
100 American Poems (ed. Rodman) . . . . .	3
Dostoevski, <i>Crime and Punishment</i> . . . . .	1
Pocket Book of Short Stories . . . . .	1½

aims of the course as defined are (1) to teach the beginning student to read accurately and thoughtfully, (2) to introduce him to some of the literary masterpieces of Western civilization, and (3) to acquaint him with the aesthetic values inherent in various literary types.

From the beginning of the complete-books sections there have been regular staff meetings of the instructors, at which the work to be taught is analyzed briefly by a staff member, after which a general discussion follows. Whenever possible, the analysis is presented by the appropriate specialist in the group. Thus, for example, the instructor from the department of classics discusses the *Odyssey* or the plays of Sophocles, while the specialist in the eighteenth century talks about *Gulliver's Travels*. If no specialist is available, the discussion is led by one of the older teachers in the group, who reports in terms of his own experience with the book in the classroom. The discussion leader usually suggests salient reference works for the guidance of the individual teachers, and during the past

year there has been a special faculty reserve shelf in the library for the staff of the course. At the beginning these meetings were attended by the entire group; now all new instructors attend regularly, and the older ones come as the spirit moves them, although they are always willing to lead a discussion if called upon to do so. There is no compulsion about following the approaches set out at these meetings, and since there are no common examinations in the course, there is opportunity for considerable flexibility of presentation whenever it is desired.

Among the works which have been taught in the past few years and which have been dropped for various reasons are Plato, *Apology and Phaedo*; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata, Clouds, Birds*; Plutarch's *Lives*; Machiavelli, *The Prince*; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*; Shaw, *Major Barbara*; Anderson, *Winesburg Ohio*; and a selection of shorter English poems. The arrangement of Browning and the American poems was frankly a compromise attempt to reconcile those staff members who preferred the close, intensive reading of relatively few poems and those who preferred to teach a single poet, tracing out the development in his work.

From time to time the students have been asked to indicate their preferences among the works read, and this information has been utilized in planning the course. Student opinion in general parallels that of the staff, although there are occasional exceptions. Most of the students enjoy *Troilus and Cressida* more than their teachers do. To a certain extent the reverse would hold true about the *Inferno*, although many of the students who did rank it high are obviously more impressed by their notion of what constitutes its subject matter ("It's good

for a person to think about what will happen to him when he dies") than by its literary merits. The *Odyssey* is an almost universal first choice, with Shakespeare, Sophocles, and Chaucer following in mixed order.

In the second semester student reaction ranked *Crime and Punishment* rather high, even though it is largely read outside of class, with only a few days of formal classroom discussion devoted to it. In general, the second part of the course lacks the solid excellence of the first, for there is a greater choice of material and it is more difficult for the staff to select a list of works agreeable to all.

The most recent stage in the evolution of the world literature course at Indiana came about in the spring of 1950, when it was decided to offer, beginning in September, 1950, instead of a choice between English literature and world literature, a single course, "Freshman Literature." This new course is in great part world literature. In the first semester the readings are: the *Odyssey*, two plays of Sophocles, the *Inferno*, two plays of Shakespeare, and Milton's *Samson Agonistes* and minor poems. In the second semester the list includes: *Gulliver's*

*Travels*, *Candide*, Keats, Browning, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and short stories.

Those students, especially English majors, who desire in addition a historical survey of English literature will be given an opportunity to get such a course on the upper-class level, taught in seminar fashion.

Thus the world literature course has progressed a long way since its introduction on the campus as a service offering for a single school. It has changed and developed and grown until it is now the only course in beginning literature. The change and development and growth will continue, because it was specifically stipulated in the planning of the new course that staff members would be encouraged to continue their habit of meeting together, discussing the works being taught, and taking appropriate action to insure the continuing success of the course. And a further stage of evolution is already visible in the future. If a general education program is instituted at Indiana University, it is highly probable that the field of the humanities will be presented through a modified version of the present course in freshman literature.

## Creative Writing and the Undergraduate<sup>1</sup>

ROBESON BAILEY<sup>2</sup>

LIKE writing itself, the teaching of writing is often painful work. It is not, I think, so lonely and so unrewarding work as writing often is. "I hate to write," a professional writer once told me, "but I love having written." The teacher has it

<sup>1</sup> A talk delivered at the meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English at Stanford University, September 7, 1949.

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better here, for he may love both the teaching and the having taught. At first look, it may seem that the teacher's rewards for having taught come from talent that develops too late for the teacher to claim credit for his work, but that is almost entirely beside the point. The undergraduate teacher gains his satisfactions not from godfathering actual

literature but from godfathering his students' self-education, the most necessary and, I sometimes think, the most neglected of all preliminaries to the achievement of literature. Without the word, the *logos* in all its senses, the mind has no existence or at least no human significance. It follows that all mankind should become as expert as possible in both the absorptive and the productive uses of the word. It is the business of creative-writing courses to initiate the student into those productive uses.

I believe that the development of helpful creative-writing programs in many of our colleges has been impeded by some fallacies which seem to underlie much of the teaching of writing in the minds of both those actively engaged in the work and those not engaged in it but doubtful of its value. The latter are often those in the strongest positions to encourage or discourage the offerings in creative writing.

First comes the fallacy that you cannot teach anybody to write, anyway. This false aphorism, this weary quarter-truth, is long overdue for the grave, and let us herewith put it there. Of course you can teach people to write. It is necessary to remember only one's own teachers who gave most richly to the shaping of whatever small talent one possessed, who developed one's sense of self-criticism, *who taught one how to write*. Or, what of one's own students and the development some of them have achieved? And, finally, there are the debts of gratitude, written and unwritten, that established literary artists are constantly paying to the teachers they knew in their youth. You cannot, of course, teach everybody to write with professional or artistic success, any more than you can teach everybody to acquire concert skill with the violin or championship ability

with the tennis racket. But that is very different from saying that you cannot teach anybody to write. Given the proportion of talent present to greater or less degree in any undergraduate class, a competent instructor can do a very great deal to help some students develop those painfully acquired skills on which all good writing rests. Even those students who possess no talent at all for expression are nevertheless going to gain a great deal. For one thing, they are going to learn how to read in a way that no other work can teach them. Indeed, the evidence of the good teacher's success is everywhere, at every level, from the freshman, inarticulate in September, who is able to write a decent term paper in May, to the brilliant senior who has already achieved some professional competence, to the successful literary artist whose tributes to his teachers are legion.

Second is the fallacy of the practice-of-parts method, or what may be called the "assembly-line method," which goes something like this: in a term of twelve weeks we shall spend the first two practicing "setting" and "description." During the next two we shall practice "characterization," which is to say, we'll inject some people into the setting. Then dialogue, and the student will write some pages in which most of the words are inclosed in quotation marks. Next we shall try "action" and after that something called "plot," when the student will hand in a synopsis. Finally, we shall spend the last weeks of the term putting all these ingredients together, and—presto!—a story emerges.

This rabbit-out-of-the-hat approach is useful, if at all, only at the most elementary level. In my experience, it has proved to be far better to tell the student a few of the general technical requirements of fiction at the beginning of the

term and then to require him to work toward the whole story. He learns better not through working on parts which have no real existence of themselves but on the whole form, all of it at once. The results in the early weeks of a beginner's course will be sad indeed, and why not? One does not expect a would-be violinist's first years of painful sawing to be music, but he steadily practices, against the compositions, the same *resistances* as the master himself. Any art requires a long, painful apprenticeship in learning fundamental skills; I believe they are learned better in the art of writing by attempts to accomplish the whole rather than a part which has no existence of its own.

Third, and closely allied to the foregoing, is the fallacy of formlessness. The theory here is that the student should be completely free to write whatever he pleases, just so the minimum number of words the course requires is met. Vignettes, prose-poems, daydreams, pastels, sketches of "quaint" (to the writer) characters, short-short-short stories and all sorts of self-expression and self-indulgence (the two terms are nearly synonymous) will flood the desk of the teacher who permits this license. If, in a general writing course, a student wishes to express a poetic sentiment, by all means let him do so but make him work it into a sonnet or some other resisting form. If he wishes to indulge a mood of sadness because of the world's iniquities, let him investigate the sources of his melancholy and project the result into the lives of some people in a genuine story. My point here is that nothing is gained from aimless wandering or from what some believe to be experimentation. The student simply does not come honestly to grips with his material, does not give it shape and form, and so learns

nothing about his subject and the skills required to deal with it well. The time for experimentation—and there is one, of course, in every artist's life—is after and not before the achievement of some competence in form.

Here, too, I believe, is the place to make a plea for the really long story, the novel, in the undergraduate curriculum. For some years I have been conducting a small group of undergraduates through the agony and satisfaction of novel-writing. I believe that undergraduates who can write reasonably good short stories will profit greatly from a sustained, year-long effort within a single frame. The experience is of considerable difficulty to both the student and the teacher and must not be undertaken lightly by either, but its year-end result for the student is that he has learned more about fiction and people and himself than any other study and effort could have taught him. There are dangers, of course—many of them; and only students of demonstrated ability and industry should be allowed to undertake such a project. Furthermore, the teacher must hold the student to at least a rough plan. The glory with which the attempt is begun soon fades, and the hard, grinding work sets in, work which the student cannot dodge. I have found, however, that the reasonably well-balanced upperclassman will go through with the project to the best of his ability and be glad to have done it. Here, for example, are some spontaneous remarks about the experience I recently received in a letter from a student, written shortly after graduation:

I'm thinking of two sturdy words—Discipline and Change. God forbid that I attempt to define education here, but it seems to me that self-discipline or control is a most valuable thing to learn. It's surprising how few academic courses help one to gain that. Novel writing did. I fell in love with my novel when it was 36

pages old, became bored with it during the next 20 pages, and loathed it from that point on until its end.

But I did manage to grind out ten or more pages a week, to make the characters walk through their plot, giggle here, and sob there. And despite the wooden-shoe quality about that novel, I do detect four or five, maybe six, little places where you can believe that something is really happening. E. Dickinson would say: "A rich man might not notice it, but to my frugal eye. . . ." And that's what I mean. I've learned frugality or discipline or whatever it is. I've learned to consider important even the tiniest success, even one or two sentences out of 82 pages. For a person like me, often subject to verbal diarrhea, it sometimes takes 82 pages to *get* one good sentence. Then, and here's where it hurts but here's what I learned: to hell with 82 pages except for that one good sentence. "Murder your darlings," you told us, and *grâce à vous*, my axe swings free!

As for Change: When I took your short story course I thought to myself, "I can't write; I have nothing to say." Later in that year I thought, "I have lots of simply astounding things to say, but I can't say them." And finally, after the novel course, I've decided that perhaps I have a few things to say, perhaps I can say them, but I'll never be sure unless I *write*. In other words the experience helped me change my attitude from maudlin self-effacement to curiosity and determination.

And here, too, while discussing form, is the place to plead for more nonfiction in advanced writing courses. For some years I gave courses in successive semesters in both short story and short nonfiction. Frequently I would have the same students in both courses. I discovered that a good many students who thought they wanted to write fiction were much better in nonfiction. It seems to me that most of our offerings are weighted too heavily in favor of fiction and poetry; certainly, the proportion of nonfiction to fiction is very much greater in the professional world. In many respects, nonfiction is harder for the undergraduate to write creditably, and it is admittedly

hard to require the study and research usually necessary for good work in this field. Nevertheless, it can often be accomplished. I had a student recently whose work in the fiction course was indifferent. In the nonfiction course, however, she worked up material on a little-known group of religious people in whom she had been interested since childhood. This paper was published in the quarterly journal of her state's historical society exactly as she had prepared it for my class. The point here is that many undergraduates could be doing excellent work of that kind if only they could be exposed to it and it were demanded of them.

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to see the idea work out in practice, I suggest that the advanced undergraduate may profitably undertake long work in nonfiction as well as in fiction. This point leads directly, however, to the fourth fallacy with which I wish to deal.

This is the fallacy that the undergraduate has nothing to say and therefore nothing to write. Let him grow up, the theory says; let him wait until experience and thought and study have ripened him, have given him some shape and maturity.

Well, how long shall he wait? (I have known people who have waited until their sixties; then they appear in extension courses, at summer schools and writers' conferences, pathetically yearning to realize on their neglected talents.) What are "ripening" and "shape" and "maturity" in this sense? Does the young person gain them automatically from exposure to a curriculum? Partly, maybe. But much more, it seems to me, does he gain them from the conscious and focused attempt to produce from his own thought and experience and study some

comment, some assertion, in whatever form he may choose. Miss Edith Mirrieles has expressed the point perfectly: "It is not lack of experience which handicaps any writer; what it is, is the purblindness which prevents his seeing or seeing into the experiences he has had." Constant and ambitious practice in writing is the quickest and surest way to overcome that purblindness and hence to foster the student's self-development toward greater understanding of himself and of the world about him. The assumption that time alone will cure the writer's ills is flat wrong. Only work will do the job, and it is never too early to begin.

Or, to express the same principle in another way, you give a student something to say by requiring him to write something. To paraphrase Gide's character (quoted in E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*), "How can I tell what I think until I see what I have written?" is a pretty sensible question. For the processes of thinking, deciding, and writing are all interdependent, *sui generis*, simultaneous. No thought has existence until it has been both written and read.

A fifth fallacy has it that the proportion of undergraduates who eventually become literary artists is so small that courses in creative writing are not worth the trouble and expense. It seems to me that this is the feeblest objection of all and completely beside the point. It would be as sensible to condemn the graduate study of literature itself, on the grounds that only a few eminent scholars emerge from the doctoral mills in each generation and that we had therefore better give it up. I think the point needs no laboring. What does need laboring is the place of creative writing in the over-all study of literature. The historical approach, the interpretative or critical approach, and

the creative approach are all of equal importance. The analogies among all the arts must again be invoked. Skill with an instrument, as in music or painting, leads to a fuller experience with the art, however humble the skill. It puts one, in a sense, in the same company as the artists, even though one's place may be well below the salt.

To meet these and other fallacies of thinking and practice, I believe we need within the offerings of our English departments not merely one or two or more courses of various grades but a completely organized program, one in which the student should be permitted to major if he wishes and if he can fulfil what ought to be quite rigorous requirements. Any such program should begin with a general sophomore course, in which students should have opportunity to try their hands at various kinds of writing. Freshmen of demonstrably superior talent may be admitted to this course, and, if their work is good in it, they should then be permitted to go into more advanced work. During junior year there should be opportunity for the student to do work in one or two forms of his choosing, say, the short story or play. During senior year majors should be required to work on a sustained project throughout the year: a novel, a biographical or historical or social study, or an ambitious play or long poem; and I believe that the student should be required to finish this project.

This work entails a good deal of counseling on the part of the teacher during spring of junior year. I ask my students to return to college in the fall with a carefully prepared plan of their work. It is a problem, however, just how closely the student should be required to adhere to his plan. In the course of actual writing, changes sometimes become nec-

essary. Nevertheless, there is danger that the student will spend the entire year on a series of false starts and consequently fail to get anywhere. My own method is to require the student to submit a fairly detailed synoptic outline, a four- or five-page statement of theme, and his reasons for wishing to do the job. I glance briefly at this material to see whether the student has apparently fulfilled the requirement; and, if he has, I then put it away *unread*, not to be re-examined before the final meeting of the course. My reasoning here is that I wish to preserve my own innocence of what the writer is trying to do so that what critical help I may be able to give him will not be colored by knowledge of what he hopes to do but will be based solely on what he *is* doing. For the same reasons, students are forbidden to talk about the unwritten portions of their work, either to me or to their fellow-students.

What about a reading program? I think it best to give individual assignments, though I know how helpful it is to the teacher if the class has read a definite set of books. These need not be many; a half-dozen well-chosen titles should be sufficient for illustrative use in class discussion. I try to have the class complete this reading during the summer, and then I make further assignments that may be appropriate to what the student is individually trying to do. I do not think that discussion of these books should involve very much critical theory, and I am quite sure that it is wrong to lead the student into the bewildering literary battles of the moment. It is admittedly instinctive in the young to seek the new, the bizarre, the scandalous, and I would not altogether curb that enthusiasm. But I try to point out how often the advance guards have

changed during the last three decades. I also warn against discipleship and coterie writing and especially against joining any group whose purpose is mutual admiration. From time to time, some good work has been produced by group members, but it is only the smallest fraction of the world's good literature. For most serious workers writing is a hard and lonely struggle, and it is a disservice to students to picture it otherwise or to lead them to think that there is salvation in banding together. Comfort, maybe; but, if comfort is the student's goal, let him seek it in religion or another art.

Some of us may remember the interview which Mr. Maxwell Geismar attempted to hold by mail with Mr. Ernest Hemingway in the pages of the *New York Times Book Review* in the summer of 1949. Mr. Geismar wanted Mr. Hemingway to express himself on the subject of his contemporaries, but Mr. Hemingway declined. "Imagine," he wrote, "not being able to get your fast ball by Truman Capote, or losing the secretariat of agriculture to Louis Bromfield. No, I think it is better just to write."

"I think it is better just to write." That holds for the undergraduate. What counts is work accomplished, not enthusiasm for Henry Miller. This is no to say that the teacher shall stifle his own enthusiasms; without them he is at best pallid and at worst soporific. It is a plea only that the teacher shall not try to mold the student in the image of another writer or, worst of all, in the image of himself. The teacher's first and lasting concern must be to make the student write and to keep him writing, to the end that the student himself learn to be his own instructor, his own critic, and his own conscience.

## That Abomination, English Spelling

LOUISE HENING JOHNSON<sup>1</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE with spelling has been long and bitter. When I was in the second half of the first grade I won a spelling match. It was the last I ever won. I won it because I could spell *beautiful*. I could spell *beautiful* because, compared to "This is a dog," and "I see a cat," it was spelled in such a crazy way. I've always had a highly retentive memory for nonsense. From that time forth I have remained convinced that English spelling does not make sense; but even at that age I knew that I must concede something to the conventions.

Throughout my grade-school years spelling was my most difficult subject. I would inscribe words on my forehead with my fingernail and rub them in, hoping they would penetrate to the brain. My mother tried to help me by pasting a large *p-a-n-e* on the window and drawing a picture of a little girl rubbing her tummy and moaning that she had a curly *p-a-i-n*. It worked for the individual words, but there was no transfer of training. Throughout my high school years I spent my lunch hours in a penalty spelling class. I still preserve the three 100's that I made in those four years, marked with large "Hurray's" and "Keep up the good work's" by my teacher. As a sophomore in college I wrote a term paper entitled "Psychology and My Spelling." I learned from my research that for poor spellers list-spelling was a waste of time. Schools which spent a half-hour a day throughout the eight grades on spelling

obtained no better results than those which taught spelling merely by correction of errors in writing.

I also learned of an experiment, conducted by the Simplified Spelling Commission, I believe, in which all text materials for the first six grades were mimeographed in phonetic transcription. In four years the experimental group covered all the work ordinarily covered in six; then one semester was devoted to teaching the class to read and write our conventional spelling. At the end of four and one-half years the children who had not been confused at the beginning by our illogical system were able to read and spell as well as those who later completed six years in the control group. They had a year and a half to learn science, history, literature, art—any important things that their teachers cared to teach them.

As a graduate student I was delighted to discover the remark of the great Danish linguist, Otto Jespersen, author of the definitive *Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles*, that English would be an excellent international language if it were not for "that pseudohistorical and antieducational abomination, English Spelling." Still later I gloated over a paragraph from Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*:

As felicitous an instance of futile classicism as can well be found, outside of the far East, is the conventional spelling of the English Language. A breach of the proprieties in spelling is extremely annoying and will discredit any writer in the eyes of all persons who are possessed of a developed sense of the true and beautiful. Eng-

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lish orthography satisfies all the requirements of the canons of reputability under the law of conspicuous waste. It is archaic, cumbrous, and ineffective; its acquisition consumes much time and effort; failure to acquire it is easy of detection. Therefore it is the first and readiest test of reputability in learning, and conformity to its ritual is indispensable to a blameless scholastic life.

If I ever become a reformer instead of a teacher, my service to the childhood of America will be to try to induce educators and publishers to adopt the International Phonetic Alphabet. Some day when there is serious unemployment in the printers' trade I may try to persuade the unions and the organizers of work relief to meet the situation by reprinting all commonly used books in phonetic transcription. But, meantime, teachers of English cannot escape the obligation of teaching their students to spell in as nearly the conventional manner as possible. There are times when convention must be bowed to even though it is contrary to reason. It would be sensible in July and August, in most parts of the United States, to dress simply in a loin-cloth; yet, if our students are to fit into our present society, they must dress in a fairly conventional, though uncomfortable, manner.

The first thing that a college teacher of spelling must acquire is a deep-rooted and thorough disrespect for English spelling. He must be absolutely convinced that there is no direct correlation between spelling and intelligence, though there is a correlation between spelling and visual acuity. Even though he spelled down the whole school when he was in the third grade and has always prided himself on the perfection of his own orthography, he must not assume that all students who misspell are either

careless or stupid. Nor must he think he has done his duty toward a student with a really serious spelling handicap when he has said, "Use a dictionary." An intelligent person who is a poor speller has usually acquired the dictionary habit long before he reaches college age. I myself seldom write a page without using a dictionary; but I still do not find it safe to submit an important page to a critical reader without first having it proofread by a good speller. Although I had carefully trained myself to write "The principal is my old pal. He is a man of high principles," I misspelled *principle* on the first term paper I wrote as a graduate student at the University of Chicago. When I wrote my first set of Doctor's preliminaries at the University of Wisconsin, my examiners told me that I had repeatedly written *led, l-e-a-d*.

It may seem absurd that, having confessed my own weakness, I still presume to tell perfect spellers how to teach spelling. But, as a matter of fact, I believe that my imperfectly successful struggles have given me a distinct advantage as a college teacher of spelling. Most flawless spellers have never really learned to spell. They just spell automatically by copying the photographic reproductions of words that are stored in their brains. I have no legible reproductions to copy, because my photographic equipment is not good. I have a serious astigmatism, and my oculist tells me that he does not prescribe the glasses that would give me the greatest visual acuity, because they would put too severe a strain on the eye muscles. To me a word is a sound, not a picture. Whatever I learn about spelling has to be learned by conscious intellectual effort. I have little trouble with the type of misspelling that results from mispronunciation, but if I relax my vigilance

for one moment I can write a word in any way that is phonetically possible. And, let me remind you, it is phonetically possible, by analogy with perfectly familiar English words, to spell *fish*, *g-h-o-t-i* (*gh* as in "rough," *o* as in "women," *ti* as in "nation").

Once a professor makes up his mind that the thing to do with a poor speller is not merely to reproach him but to teach him, he can begin to make headway. If he has any respect for the law of diminishing returns, he will not try to make the poor speller perfect; but he can help him to avoid a great many embarrassing errors. There are two classes of misspelling which cause—or should cause—real embarrassment. The first consists of the "Spelling Demons"—the few dozen words like *too* and *dining* and *separate* which almost any fifth-grader can tell you how to spell and almost any adult can on occasion misspell and which account for a vast majority of the misspellings in all unproofread writing. The second class consists of long, unfamiliar, infrequently used words. If a person refers casually to an antediluvian ichthyosaur or to an example of onomatopoeia and misspells the word, the natural comment is, "Humph, trying to make an impression. Well, a little learning is a dangerous thing."

For this second class of misspellings the advice, "Use the dictionary," is adequate. But if the student who makes frequent errors in the first class is allowed to say, "Oh, that's nothing to worry about. I know how to spell *too*. It was just a slip of the pen," he is doomed. He must be taught that *too* is the hardest word in the English language to spell and that spelling it correctly is a matter, not of mere knowledge, but of habit. He must be convinced that the habit is worth acquiring,

and then he must be given sound advice about how to acquire it.

It is, I concede, out of the question to spend college class time drilling the student who still needs drill on the spelling of *too* and *there* and *its*. The best thing I know to do for him is to tell him to get hold of an old copy of Ward's *Sentence and Theme*, study the spelling lessons faithfully, and have his mother, or his best girl, or the scholarship chairman of his fraternity dictate a drill to him every day. It won't do him any harm to realize that the skill he is being asked to acquire is an elementary skill—one that can best be acquired by elementary methods. If, however, you hesitate to offer him a high school freshman text, he will find considerable help in the *New Practice Handbook in English* by Easley S. Jones, Mildred Wallace, and Agnes Law Jones (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949). The sections entitled "Spelling Strategy" and "Spelling Rules" outline a sound plan of attack on the Demons, though the eight exercises will be only a beginning for the really poor speller, who will need to invent many more drills for himself.

There are, of course, poor spellers who have no more trouble than the average student with the Demons. Some of them possess perfectly good photographic equipment and simply fail to focus it. All you need do for them is to impress them with the importance of looking at words carefully and focusing on the trouble spots, both when they read and when they write. It is well to remember, too, that, though the eye and the ear are the organs most used in learning to spell, they are not the organs we actually spell with. For the athlete, the expert typist, the student blessed with mechanical aptitude, "Write ten times" is good advice. To get the feel of the word at the tips of

his fingers will help him. And oral spelling, time-wasting as it may be for the person with a photographic memory, is valuable to the person who remembers best the succession of sounds he can feel in his articulatory organs. If his mind keeps insisting that there should be a direct relation between sound and spelling, he may even say "to-ward" and "fore-head" and "p-neumonia" to himself while he writes.

On the other hand, there is a considerable number of students now in college who learned to read by the whole-word, whole-sentence method and who, because they changed schools or because the reading programs in the schools they attended were poorly co-ordinated, failed to learn anything at all about the relation between sounds and single letters. Imperfectly phonetic as English spelling is, most of the consonants do bear a fairly constant relation to the sounds they represent. For the student who has not picked up even an elementary knowledge of phonetics, a grade-school text like *This Way to Better Speech*, by Louise Abney and Dorothy Minace (World Book Co.) is useful.

For students capable of applying rules, four rules are worth learning: the rule for dropping final *e*; the rule for doubling final consonants; the rule "*I* before *e* except after *c* or when sounded as *a*, as in

*neighbor* and *weigh*"; and the rule for changing *y* to *ie*. All the other rules I know of apply to such small classes of words or involve so many exceptions that it is easier to learn the words separately.

In learning words easily confused the poor speller should be strongly urged to place each member of the pair in his mind not with its confusing opposite but with other words like it: not *its*, *it's*, but *his*, *her*, *its*; not *their*, *there*, but *here*, *there*, *everywhere*.

Finally, for his own private Demons the poor speller should be urged to adopt or invent his own private methods of exorcism. He may remind himself that "There is a rat in *sep-a-rat-e*," that "*Friend* ends in *end*"; or he may write troublesome letters in fancy script or heavy strokes or a special color, until they become fixed in his mind's eye; or he may chant the letters until he hears them in his sleep.

None of these devices, probably, will make him a perfect speller—witness my own experience with *principle*. But faithful application of them, combined with application of the other methods I have suggested, can be trusted to raise him from the class of the conspicuously poor to the rank of respectability. If you and he share my attitude toward English spelling, and Jespersen's and Veblen's, he will aspire to no higher rank.

In a free country, we punish men for the crimes they commit, but never for the opinions they have. And the reason this is so fundamental to freedom is not, as many suppose, that it protects the few unorthodox from suppression by the majority. To permit freedom of expression is primarily for the benefit of the majority, because it protects criticism, and criticism leads to progress.

PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN  
*Message to Congress, September 22, 1950*

## *The English Curriculum at West Point*

RUSSELL K. ALSPACH<sup>2</sup>

WHEN the words "The United States Military Academy at West Point" are mentioned, most people remember a quick tour of West Point in the course of a summer vacation trip and conjure up a picture composed somewhat vaguely of a collection of gray-stone buildings, a large parade ground, and companies of immaculately uniformed and headdressed cadets standing stiffly at attention or marching with carefully measured steps past a group of reviewing officers. Nothing is inaccurate in this picture, but it is incomplete.

Our Military Academy of course is, and by definition must be, basically a college for the training of army and air-force officers. But West Point's view of adequate officer training is that it must include academic, as well as tactical, studies; and that, of the two, academic studies are perhaps the more important at this first stage of the embryo officer's career. What the casual visitor to the Point sees on the parade ground is the result of tactical studies; what he cannot see—and it is this that makes his picture incomplete—is the difficult academic curriculum that every cadet goes through.

That curriculum is basically an engineering one, but emphasis during the

last thirty years has shifted more and more to the humanities until today about 40 per cent of the cadet's academic time is concerned with the study of English language and literature; of foreign languages (French, Spanish, German, Russian, or Portuguese); of the social sciences (economics, government, history); and of law (criminal, constitutional, military). The remainder is taken up with mathematics and the natural sciences (mechanics, physics, chemistry, electricity, etc.).

Our main interest here is with the work in English language and literature. I shall deal with it under four headings: (1) faculty, (2) sectioning, (3) course of study, and (4) method of preparation. Since the success or failure of any course in any subject depends on the ability of the teacher, I have put first things first and shall begin by describing how the faculty in English, taken largely from West Point graduates, is selected.

We start early. While the cadets are attending their classes in English, they are carefully observed by their instructors, each of whom makes a report on the individual cadet's possibilities as a future teacher. The reports are kept on file; when we receive an application—and we have many—from one of our graduates for a tour of duty as a teacher in English, we have an immediate reference to him. If we appoint him, we send him to a graduate school for a year's work in English, after which he comes to us as an instructor for three years. It is our intent

<sup>1</sup> Based on a paper read April 15, 1948, at Schoolmen's Week, Southeastern Convention, District of Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant colonel and professor of English, USMA; on the staff of the English department, University of Pennsylvania, before the war; lieutenant commander in the navy during the war; author of *Irish Poetry from the English Invasion to 1798*.

that he get his M.A. at the end of his year's graduate work. During his teaching tenure the officer-instructor is encouraged to continue taking graduate work in the winter term—since his weekly teaching load is from ten to twelve hours, this is feasible—and in summer school. Those officers who show themselves outstanding teachers are usually recalled for a second and even a third tour of teaching after they have served intervening tours of duty, amounting to three or four years a tour, elsewhere.

In addition to West Point graduates, we have access also to the officers in the Organized Reserve Corps and to civilians. The Organized Reserve Corps is made up mostly of ROTC college graduates and of officers who were commissioned from civilian life during the war and received reserve commissions after the war. Officers from the ORC we can have on a four-year-term-renewal basis: in this way we are assured of a certain number of instructors who will be with us as long as they choose to stay. We have three ORC instructors now. Civilians can be incorporated into the faculty by making them reserve officers on active duty.

With these methods of choosing personnel we assure ourselves of an excellent teaching faculty in normal times; and I can honestly say that in my years as a university teacher of English I rarely saw such thorough and, at the same time, imaginative instruction in literature and composition as I see constantly at West Point.

The second of my headings I call "sectioning." By this term I mean our practice of dividing the classes into sections according to grades. A section means, in numbers, about sixty students: a class of about six hundred men (our average class size) has, therefore, ten sections num-

bered from 1, the highest, to 10, the lowest. Thus a cadet in the first section of English, or mathematics, or physics, etc., is one of the sixty highest-ranking men in that subject. When a cadet begins work in a new subject, he is sectioned alphabetically; at the end of the first month he is resectioned according to his grades for that month; he is resectioned again according to his cumulative grades at the end of the second month; and so on until the last month of his course. Usually very little change occurs in the personnel of the section after the second resectioning. For actual teaching purposes our sections are further divided into four units of about fifteen men each.

To make plain how this system works, suppose we follow a yearling, or sophomore, through his course in literature. His grades in his plebe, or freshman, year were good enough, let us say, to keep him in the second section in most of his subjects. When he enters the sophomore literature course, he is sectioned either alphabetically, as he was at the beginning of his freshman courses, or according to his standing in English for the preceding year. No matter which happens, he realizes that he must prove himself anew to get or to hold a place in the second section.

But he makes the mistake of not working very hard in the beginning of the term, and after the resectioning at the end of the first month he finds himself in the sixth section. This wakes him up, and during the second month he gets down to hard work; at the end of that month he has raised his grade so that he moves up to the familiar ground of the second section.

One of the reasons he is glad he has regained a place in the second section is that he knows the top two sections will be given special work during the last eight

or nine weeks of the course. When the special work begins, he discovers that he must not only master the work the lower sections are taking but also get the time somewhere to do the additional reading and theme-writing required. But he meets these extra demands on him, and the result is that his grades show a rising curve and he finishes well up in his section.

What are the advantages of this system? We believe there are three:

1. It keeps alive the spirit of competition.
2. It gives the proved superior student a job in keeping with his ability.
3. It brings together men of about the same stamp, so that a man talks the language of his neighbor.

The third of my headings is "course of study." Cadets take two years of English: a year of composition and public speaking, two-thirds of a year of literature, and one-third of a year of advanced exposition and literature. The academic year at West Point begins in the first week in September and lasts to the first week in June. With vacations out, the year is thirty-eight weeks long. English is taken for two and one-half hours a week; thus a year's work totals about ninety hours.

Freshman, or plebe, English is composition and public speaking: a little more than one-third public speaking and the rest composition. Composition includes grammar—about fifteen hours; and detailed study of expository types: criticism, analysis, local color, feature article, the research paper, etc. The big job is the research paper, about three thousand words long, done on a subject the cadet himself chooses. The paper takes him about three weeks to write,

and when finished it must include correctly inserted footnotes and a critical bibliography.

In public speaking, where our small instructional units of about fifteen men are of particular advantage, each cadet gives about nine speeches, either prepared or extemporaneous, from four to eight minutes long. The subjects come under the familiar headings of the speech to inform, to actuate, to entertain, to convince, etc. In addition, several lessons of the group-discussion type give the cadet the opportunity of being the leader of one discussion and a participant in several others. He is graded in this group work not only on his ability in public speaking but also on his ability to find the basic points at issue and to use logical proof in his reasoning.

Sophomore, or yearling, English is work in literature. The course at present is grouped around the literary tempers of classicism, romanticism, and realism. Under classicism we studied last year selections from both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; parts of the Bible; the *Apology* of Socrates; Book I of *Paradise Lost*; Part III of *Gulliver's Travels*; *The Rape of the Lock*; Arnold's *Hebraism and Hellenism*; and selections from Housman. In romanticism we began with the ballads; then selections from *Don Quixote*; Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part I; and selections from Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Hawthorne, Lamb, De Quincey, Ruskin, Tennyson, Arnold, Browning, Poe, and Yeats. Realism began with Chaucer (the "General Prologue" and "The Pardoner's Tale"); followed by selections from Macaulay, Carlyle, Whitman, Tolstoi, Kipling, Masfield, Hardy, Frost, Eliot, MacLeish, and Auden; and these plays: *Hedda Gabler*, *Beyond the Horizon*, and Yevreinov's *The Theatre of the Soul*.

A definite assignment is made for every period in the literature course; and the student must be prepared to answer and discuss, either orally or in writing, both general and detailed questions on the day's work. The length of an assignment varies according to the material; this year, for example, we are studying Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in four lessons, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* in two, and Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Ode to a Nightingale," and "When I have Fears that I may cease to be," in one.

A written quiz, lasting from ten to twenty minutes and made up of both objective and subjective questions, is given every third or fourth period on the day's assignment. The remainder of class time is taken up with discussion in which we try to bring about understanding of good literature. There is practically no formal lecturing. The final grade is an average of the student's discussion grades (based on his contributions to the oral discussions), theme grades, written-quiz grades, and written-general-review (final examination) grades. A mark of 80 or better exempts from the written general reviews.

Do not, incidentally, think of our teaching sessions as rigid military setups, with an officer automaton in uniform snapping questions at cadet automatons in uniform who, when addressed, leap to their feet, salute, and snap back answers. The classroom atmosphere is one of complete relaxation; expostulation and reply are on as easy a basis as in a civilian school. And here the advantage of the small group is most marked, for to sit down with fourteen or fifteen men for an hour's discussion of an assignment is the kind of stimulating experience that is obviously impossible with a class of forty, fifty, a hundred, or more. Having taught

the larger groups for many years, I can make the comparison.

Senior English is work in advanced exposition and literature. The course consists of the study and analysis of such problems as freedom of expression, character and leadership, and education. The cadets read assigned selections and write themes. On education, for example, they read this year James Harvey Robinson's "Kinds of Thinking," Hutchins' "Education for Freedom," and Emerson's "The American Scholar"; on freedom of expression Justice Holmes's dissenting opinion in the case of *Abrams v. United States* and Judge Woolsey's ruling in lifting the ban on *Ulysses*; on character and leadership, *King Lear*. The work is so planned that it serves, in part, as a development of freshman composition and sophomore literature.

Finally, my fourth heading: "method of preparation." It applies to both course and teacher. During the late spring the instructors in composition and literature hold a series of meetings to decide on course content and daily lesson assignments for the following year. At these meetings instructor and student criticisms about the courses as they are being given are searchingly explored, and possible changes for improvement are discussed. It is rare indeed that no changes are made; and frequently major shifts, involving the adoption of new texts and new methods of approach for subject-matter presentation, come about.

When course content and lesson assignments have been fixed, the course director asks the instructors to let him have their preferences for the lesson assignments they would like to prepare instructor conferences on. (An instructor conference is a meeting of the course instructors a day or two before any partic-

ular lesson is to be given, at which the assignment is discussed thoroughly.) In literature an instructor preference would be, of course, a poet, a dramatist, etc.; in composition, a phase of grammar, an expository type, a speech type, etc. Here is how the whole thing works out in practice.

Suppose one of the instructors in the literature course wants to conduct the conference on Chaucer and makes Chaucer his first preference. When the conference assignments are given out, the chances are that he will find Chaucer on his list. Obviously, some preferences will coincide; usually, however, an instructor will get his first choice. The student assignment in Chaucer, covering two periods, is the "General Prologue" and "The Pardoner's Tale."

The instructor knows that at the Chaucer conference his fellows will be pretty well prepared on Chaucer in general and will have studied the lesson assignment thoroughly; his job, as conference leader, will be threefold: (1) to outline Chaucer's life and works; (2) to discuss the background of the *Canterbury Tales*, i.e., the legend of Becket, the custom of the Canterbury pilgrimage, the "framed tale" tradition, sources, etc.; and (3) to go over the lesson assignment

in detail, pointing out what he thinks are significant passages that might be called to the students' attention and clearing up any textual questions the other instructors may have. He knows that 1 and 2 will be chiefly in the nature of refresher work that the others will not have had time to do because of the pressure of their own conferences. But he knows that 3 will involve much discussion, that each instructor will have picked his own passages to be emphasized in the classroom, and that there will be many questions involving unclear words, phrases, and lines.

Let me emphasize that, in the discussion that invariably takes place under 3, no one answer, when that answer involves interpretation, is ever laid down as final. Nor is any specific over-all plan for general lesson procedure ever adopted as *the* plan: each instructor teaches the lesson in his own way. But the conferences are a tremendous help to the new instructor and a source often of deeper insight to the more experienced men.

Here, then, is the story of English at West Point. We believe we are in the best tradition of education in what we are doing—and perhaps helping to shape that tradition. We hope we can continue our work uninterruptedly in this most shaky of all possible worlds.

## Current English Forum

HAROLD B. ALLEN, ADELINE C. BARTLETT, MARGARET M. BRYANT (*chairman*), ARCHIBALD A. HILL, JAMES B. McMILLAN, KEMP MALONE, RUSSELL THOMAS

### "NOW IS THE TIME"; "ONCE IS ENOUGH"

In a discussion I called *now* in "Now is the time" and *once* in "Once is enough" "members of a special subclass of adverbs." A correspondent writes in disagreement: "In 'Now is the time' I am quite sure that *now* is a plain noun as is also *once* in 'Once is enough.' If one said, 'One time is enough,' no one would question that *time* was a noun and the subject, the real subject." I can clear away one level of misunderstanding by freely admitting that *time* in *one time* is certainly a noun, though it seems to me that the question of how to analyze *now* and *once* remains arguable. In discussions of this sort, however, it is impossible not to sympathize with the statement of Trager and Smith in their excellent though highly technical *Outline of English Structure*: "Such questions as . . . 'Is home an adverb in I'm going home,' and so on, become essentially meaningless, and really pertinent questions about the constructions can be asked and answered."<sup>1</sup> It is hoped that the perhaps controversial answers which will be given may open a vista of possible analysis to those readers willing to admit that English structure is not yet fully known. The discussion will center, further, on whether *now* is a noun, since that is the point at issue, rather than on a full identification of *now*.

The underlying disagreement seems to be on the relative weight to be attached to meaning and to form in language analysis and definition. To most practical teachers meaning probably seems the deciding factor in all analysis, and many linguists agreed, at least in the past. Yet since the appearance of Leonard Bloomfield's epoch-making *Lan-*

*guage* in 1933, most American linguistic scholars have felt that semantic criteria are difficult and unreliable, if not unscientific. Their procedure, then, is to define in such a way as to give form priority over meaning, though it has certainly proved as yet impractical to make no use of meaning at all.

To return to *now* and *once*, they have been called nouns on the basis of substitutability with the noun phrase "one time." No such substitution is suggested for *now*, by the way, though it would not be hard to find one, such as "the present is the time." Since these substitutions are rough semantic equivalents, the reason for calling *now* a noun seems to be at least partly semantic. Let us test the statement that it is a noun, first, by how many formal noun characteristics it shows and, second, by seeing whether a consistent description of other sentences can be given if it is called a noun.

I cannot of course give a complete description of formal noun characteristics, since that would require the complete English grammar which has not yet been written. It is to be hoped, however, that the characteristics I shall give will be accepted as both important and sufficient for recognition purposes. I do not maintain that every noun has all these characteristics; rather it is true that anything called a noun must have some of them. First, nouns have forms for two numbers and two cases. Often three of the forms are homonymous, as with *boy* (*boy, boy's, boys*), though the full four forms can be seen with *man* or *ox*. Second, nouns (except for some well-marked subclasses such as numerals and proper names, each with their own formal characteristics) can be immediately preceded by articles. Third, the typical construction of a noun phrase is ar-

<sup>1</sup> Part III: *Syntax* (Washington: Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State, 1949), pp. 25-26.

ticle, adverb, adjective or adjectives, noun. Thus nouns can be immediately preceded by adjectives but not by adverbs. We can say "a thoroughly practical device" but not "a thoroughly device." Similarly, adverbs are not normally preceded by articles unless the adverb forms part of such a construction as that just described. Fourth, nouns can stand in the relation of subject to the rest of the sentence, marked by the presence of a required ending in the verb which usually follows. This requirement, of course, goes by the name of concord. It will be apparent that nouns share many of these characteristics with other parts of speech. For instance, pronouns have a case and number inflection, and adjectives can be preceded by articles. Yet it seems reasonable to state that any word which has at least some of the characteristics here enumerated, without at the same time the characteristics peculiar to other form classes (for instance, the third case form of such pronouns as *me* or the comparative endings of adjectives), must be a noun, though it is obvious that there will be examples like *run*, noun and verb, where forms belonging to two parts of speech are homonymous.

How many of the above characteristics do *now* and *once* exhibit? Neither one has case and number forms. Neither one is freely preceded by the articles, though the similar word *then*, it is true, occurs in "the then president," which suggests overlapping with adjectives rather than with nouns. There is, of course, the dialectal "the now" and a rare sentence type which I do not believe I use, "I'll do it for the once." Aside from these, I can find no exceptions. At least we cannot say, "The time is a now," or "The now is the time." Again, *now* and *once* fit typically into adverb position in such phrases as "a now old car" and "a once new car." Significantly they do not fit into noun position, as in "A new now is the time." Lastly, *now* and *once*, together with such other words as *there* and *here*, do indeed fit into the position characteristic of the subject and seem to act like a sort of fictitious subject—like the fictitious subject in "It is a fine day." Yet even here there is a difference, since the verb concord

is controlled rather by what follows than by anything in *now* and *once*. Thus we say, "Now are the days," or "Now is the time." With the fictitious subject *it* the verb is singular, no matter what follows. That is, we do not say, "It are they." Thus then, in formal characteristics, *now* and *once* are not much like nouns, sharing only one important characteristic and that with a difference.

If, however, the formal characteristics are regarded as relatively unimportant, the reader may wish to dismiss all that has gone before as irrelevant. Let us see then if calling *now* a noun makes consistent description possible. If *now* is a noun because it stands in subject position, does it ever stand in object position? It does indeed stand in object position, as in "He sees now." It will be immediately objected that *sees* is an intransitive verb and so does not take an object. But our description has laid a trap for us. *See* is either transitive or intransitive, according to whether a noun follows or does not, as in "He sees," in contrast to "He sees the table." Since we have defined *now* as a noun because it stands in subject position and is semantically equivalent with a noun phrase, we are forced to say that it is a noun when it is in object position, where it is semantically (though not formally, be it noted) equivalent to some such noun phrase as "the objects before him at present." I do not believe that such a conclusion would meet with much approval, and it would certainly greatly complicate language analysis.

A way out of the difficulty is that suggested earlier. *Now* and *once* are formally like adverbs but are members of a small subclass of adverbs, all of which lack the termination in *-ly*, and which have the characteristic of standing in subject position. To call them nouns seems to lead to contradiction. A third possibility is to call them adverbs but to specify that they are sometimes used as nouns. Since I have no wish to be dogmatic, I should regard this alternative as acceptable if all the facts of usage are taken into account. Yet it seems to me less satisfactory, since it makes for more cumbersome analysis.

A. A. HILL

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

## *Report and Summary*

### *About Education*

MEMBERS OF THE NCTE COLLEGE Section will meet for dinner Friday evening, December 29, at the Faculty Club of New York University. Speakers for the evening are Richard P. Blackmur and Granville Hicks. The session is timed to start about an hour after the last meetings of the Modern Language Association.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL Conference of University Professors of English ever to be convened was held August 25-30 at Magdalen College, Oxford. Professor Dorothy Bethurum, Connecticut College for Women, who attended, has written for us the following report:

"The idea of the conference grew out of the informal association of English, French, and Belgian professors, and it was decided some time last summer to invite one hundred and fifty professors from universities all over the world to meet at Oxford this past summer. Professor C. A. Wrenn of Pembroke College, Oxford, assumed the chairmanship of the organizing committee, aided by Professors Bullough, Charlton, Ellis-Fermor, Pattison, Renwick, Willey, Malone, and Zautvoort.

"Six sections with three papers each were set up on the following topics and with the following chairmen: Linguistic Questions, Place-Names, and Dialects, Professor Kemp Malone; Mediaeval Literature, Professor Karl Brunner; Drama, Including Shakespeare, Professor F. P. Wilson; Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Literature, Professor W. L. Renwick; Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Literature, Professor G. A. Bonnard; The Teaching of English Literature in the Universities, Professor H. B. Charlton.

"The Conference was most hospitably entertained, not only by the President and Fellows of Magdalen College, who made available the unparalleled facilities of the college, but also by Oxford University, the Maison Française, the mayor of Oxford, and the British Council, through whose co-operation the Council was held. All the members enjoyed to the full the opportunity to meet distinguished colleagues from all over the world, and, as at any such meeting, the informal sessions proved to be the most valuable part of the program.

"Of the 136 delegates present, forty were from the British Isles, seventeen were Americans, thirteen French, eleven German, ten Scandinavian, and nine Swiss. Thirty countries were represented, none from behind the Iron Curtain, though a professor from Warsaw accepted the invitation but did not appear.

"The Conference has been invited by its French members to meet in Paris in 1953. In the meantime a committee has been set up to constitute a very informal sort of organization, and it is very ardently hoped by all who were present in Oxford that a second meeting will take place in 1953."

A BILL HAS BEEN INTRODUCED INTO Congress which would provide scholarships for needy students. The Student Aid Bill would provide for scholarships of not more than \$800 a year for four years. It also provides for a student-loan program which would gradually become self-supporting. Another provision is for the establishment of a National Council on Student Aid, a twelve-member board to be appointed by the United States Commissioner of Education. The whole subject is discussed, along

with other aspects of federal aid to education, in an extended symposium which appears in the October *Journal of Higher Education*.

PRESS REPORTS DESCRIBE AN INTERESTING educational venture by the University of Michigan, which is setting up an experimental series of courses to be televised over Station WWJ-TV, Detroit. The plans call for a three-part, hour-long course. The first twenty minutes of each hour's telecast will be academic in character, with lectures on history, fine arts, music, and the fundamentals of the natural sciences; the second twenty minutes will be generally classified as "modern living" with subjects ranging from "How To Buy a Home" to "How To Be Happy in the Later Years"; the third segment will take the TV class into research laboratories, workshops, and rare-book vaults now open to only a few accredited students.

SOME SIX HUNDRED COLORED PHOTOGRAPHIC transparencies of many of the famous art treasures of the Vatican, St. Peter's, and the famous basilicas of Rome are now available for magazine, book, and newspaper publication, slide films, filmstrips, television, etc. Distribution rights are held by the International News Photos, 215 East Forty-fifth Street, New York 17.

HENRY L. MENCKEN CELEBRATED his seventieth birthday September 12 by officially turning over to the Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore a gift which has already become known as "The Mencken Papers." These include the great bulk of his literary accumulations, ranging from his own copy of his own first book, *Ventures into Verse* (1903), to all his "American Language" material collected over forty years. The "Papers" also include his collection of genealogical material, ninety of his personal scrapbooks, a complete four-year file of "The Free Lance" clippings, and his own copies of the works of such authors as Cabell, Anderson, Dreiser, Farrell, Lewis, etc., with letters

from the authors tipped in. The collection is now available for examination by accredited scholars in the field. Applications must be made to Richard Hart, head of the Literature and Language Department, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

THE NEW YORK STATE ENGLISH Council, organized in Syracuse last May, now boasts a membership of nearly one thousand teachers. Its first meeting was attended by more than five hundred elementary, high school, and college teachers of English from throughout the state. The first issue of the group's quarterly, the *English Record*, has already appeared, and plans have been laid for a monograph series. Founding officers include: Elizabeth J. Drake of Binghamton, President; Strang Lawson of Colgate University, Vice-President (Colleges); Elsie Waldow of Snyder, Vice-President (Secondary Schools); Marion C. Thiesen of New York City, Vice-President (Elementary Schools); George W. Dawson of Manhasset, Secretary; and Richard K. Corbin of Peekskill, Treasurer.

MEMBERS OF THE NEW ENGLAND Association of Teachers of English participated in a varied program at their fall meeting in New Haven on October 20-21. Dr. Marion C. Sheridan was local chairman. Among the speakers at large group meetings were Chairman Stanley T. Williams of Yale University's English Department; John H. Crider, editor of the *Boston Herald*; and Mrs. Earnest Gilbreth Carey, coauthor of *Cheaper by the Dozen*. Discussion groups considered aspects of creative writing, functional high school English, English and business, and banned books. The last-named group was directed by David K. Berninghausen, who served as chairman of the committee which produced the American Library Association's resolution opposing loyalty oaths (see below).

"ARE SCHOOLS STILL TEACHING Reading?" asks Elsa Butcher in the September *Peabody Journal of Education*. She has-

tens to answer the question in the affirmative and marshals an impressive set of statistics to hurl at the critics who insist that students of today do not read as well as those of earlier generations. Miss Butcher quotes authority to prove that reading comprehension has improved according to the results obtained from tests given many years ago and repeated recently. She points to increased sales and library circulation of children's literature. Her answer to the complaint that more students are below grade averages is the natural enough one that more students of mediocre and low ability stay in school and in grade today—learning, if not to become expert readers, to be better individuals and citizens. Such arguments as these are valuable to teachers as weapons to use in the frequent encounters with those who are old-fashioned, cynical, or misinformed.

**THE SUPERIORITY OF FILMSTRIPS** over movies as an aid in presenting expository material is discussed in the informative but unfortunately unavailable U.S. Department of Agriculture publication *What Research Shows about Visual Aids*. Prepared as a guide for agricultural extension workers, the pamphlet contains a number of facts the teacher might think about. The motion picture, especially with sound, is without peer as an aid to teaching when complete continuity is desired, when the subject calls for motion, and when maximum emotional impact is sought. As such its value in literature instruction is obvious. On the other hand, the use of movies for essentially static subject matter (viz., grammar) is pointless. The filmstrip, it was brought out, is best used when a series of steps are to be explained and when the classroom situation might require more exposition or a different sort of exposition than that contained in typical movies. By permitting audience participation, the filmstrip presentation often causes more personal interest and actual learning than the motion picture. The element of inexpensiveness may well be, for many teachers, the deciding factor in favor of the filmstrip.

**CREATIVE WRITERS RATHER THAN** creative writing is the subject of Selma Bishop's article in the October *Clearing House*. Basing her comments on fifteen years of teaching creative writing, Mrs. Bishop hazards some generalizations concerning the sort of student who is most likely to produce good original writing. Such a student is not among the most brilliant (95-106 I.Q.); he is the somewhat listless, seemingly unsociable pupil who is not good at memorizing and refuses to be bothered by details and rules. He likes free reading and, though likely to be found staring at something not worth his time, is in reality a keen observer both of people and of things. He refuses to respond when he feels he is being worked upon, since his individualism is strong; yet, earn his respect, demonstrate that you have respect for him, and he will emerge from his shell and more often than not have with him a not inconsiderable pearl or two.

**THE SECRETARY OF THE COLLEGE** Board, in an article appearing in the September *Education* magazine, explains the nature of the revised English test now being used experimentally, and the reasoning behind its construction.

The test currently adopted is a one-hour, semi-objective examination in English composition designed to measure organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and the mechanics of grammar, syntax, and punctuation. There is no test in literature. The experimental examination is based on the assumption that the best indication of good college material is the possession of "power to deal cogently and lucidly with ideas synthesized both from reading and experience, both academic and practical." The new form is an essay examination which contains one question in each of three fields: literature, science, and social studies. The student chooses two subjects and is required to write for one and one-half hours on each. Papers are rated on organization, mechanics, style, and content, the ratings in each category falling into one of five groupings rather than being exact scores. The test requires more

time but supplants present separate ones in science and social science.

Final adoption of such an examination would be an encouraging sign that proponents of curricular rigidity in the high schools who defend their views in terms of requirements for college admission are rapidly running out of facts upon which to base their claims.

**LIFE FOR OCTOBER 16 IS A SPECIAL** United States schools issue. Opinions of our present performance reported in an Elmo Roper survey are mixed, as one would expect, and frequently based upon misinformation or prejudice. Henry Steele Commager contributes a ringing tribute, "Our Schools Have Kept Us Free." There are a number of well-presented reports of good teaching improvements in education. John William Sperry sounds a sour note in "Who Teaches the Teachers?" A check list by which to find out "How Good Is Your School?" points in the right direction but not always to the strategically most important features. Teachers who missed it should hunt up the public library copies.

**A LONG LETTER TO THE EDITOR** denouncing educators as responsible for the present shortcomings of American life appears in the October 7 *Saturday Review*. It is the reaction of satirist Philip Wylie to that magazine's annual survey of education. He flatly accuses teachers and administrators of failing to practice their democratic preachments by permitting inroads upon academic freedom and prejudice in institutions of learning. Although the letter suffers by virtue of its vituperative tone, Wylie is not without justification for some of his criticism. Dean Melby's reply admits this but insists that educators, themselves under the constant pressure of society, are neither alone responsible for, nor alone able to cure, the ailments besetting American society.

**A BITTER CIVIL-RIGHTS BATTLE IS** raging between the faculty of the University of California (Berkeley and Los Angeles)

and the regents. In the spring of 1949 President Sproul proposed to the regents that all members of the faculty be required to sign a special non-Communist oath. He hoped by this to prevent the passage of even more objectionable measures by the state legislature. The legislative threat subsided, and the faculty protested. They resented the implied doubt of their loyalty, and they feared any beginning of interference with freedom of personal opinion. After protracted negotiations the University Senate, a faculty body, finally agreed that everyone should be given his choice of signing an oath or having a loyalty hearing by the Tenure Committee of the senate. Some men chose the hearing, and in May, 1950, the Tenure Committee recommended to the president that most of these be approved but that six who refused to answer any questions about their personal beliefs be discharged. By a close vote the regents accepted this recommendation, but the minority left a parliamentary opening for reconsideration. In August the regents did reconsider and ordered all who refused to sign the oath—now reduced to about thirty—discharged without hearing and without appeal. The majority of these were junior teachers who had not attained tenure, but some supposedly had tenure rights. Since then some who had signed the oath have resigned in protest against the discharge of their colleagues who had conscientiously refused. The discharged men, we understand, are appealing to the courts.

The issue is not communism; no one has ever charged that any members of the faculty are Communists. Two nonfaculty employees were discharged for Communist associations—one for attending years ago some Communist meetings, and the other because of a Communist sister. Many faculty members who thought it best to sign the required oath feel that the real issues are academic freedom and tenure. The fact that the antifaculty leader in the Board of Regents is an attorney for the Progressive Farmers Association, which has a very black labor record, is one of their reasons for suspicion. Violently anti-Communist Sidney

Hook, reviewing (in the *Saturday Review of Literature*) George R. Stewart's *The Year of the Oath*, while insisting upon the regents' right to bar Communists from teaching, agrees that faculty rights have been invaded.

The California tempest is not an isolated phenomenon. Elsewhere the well-founded fear that Communist spies may be at work has led well-meaning patriots to join with the spokesman of special interests in demanding unnecessary and even harmful security measures. On the day this is written the *Chicago Tribune* has a front-page story apparently showing that a textbook written by George S. Counts teaches high school students to imitate Stalin. Students must not know what Stalin professes nor why those professions appeal to underprivileged persons and nations! Even liberal President George D. Stoddard has seen fit to write at length explaining and defending the requirement of a loyalty oath at the University of Illinois.

The *Bulletin* of the American Library Association for September prints part of David K. Berninghausen's remarks in presenting the report of the ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom. He cites the dismissal of Quaker Elizabeth Haas of Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore for refusal to sign an oath required by Maryland's new Ober Law. The ALA Council adopted the following resolution, July 21, 1950:

WHEREAS, A democracy must preserve freedom of thought and expression if it is to survive; and

WHEREAS, Loyalty investigations of library employees may create an atmosphere of suspicion and fear and tend to limit intellectual freedom by rendering it hazardous to hold or express other than popular or orthodox views; and

WHEREAS, Librarians have a special responsibility to provide information on all sides of controversial issues, but cannot do so if intellectual conformity becomes a factor affecting their employment or tenure; and

WHEREAS, The American Library Association has received evidence that loyalty tests may easily lead to the violation of the constitutional rights of library employees, and in

some cases already have done so; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That we, the Council of the American Library Association, strongly protest loyalty programs which inquire into a library employee's thoughts, reading matter, associates, or membership in organizations, unless a particular person's definite actions warrant such investigation. We approve the affirmation of allegiance to our Government. We condemn loyalty oaths and investigations which permit the discharge of an individual without a fair hearing. We hold that in a fair hearing the accused is furnished a statement of the charges against him, is allowed to see the evidence against him, is given an opportunity to prepare and to present his defense and to question his accusers with the aid of legal counsel, is presumed innocent until proved guilty, and is given the opportunity, if adjudged guilty, of judicial review.

That the course of the storm is the same as that which followed World War I is evident from Robert Morss Lovett's description in his autobiography, *All My Years*. Two recent articles which also help to give perspective to the current tempest are Robert P. Ludlum's "Academic Freedom and Tenure: A History," in the spring *Antioch Review*, and the presidential address of Ralph H. Lutz to the American Association of University Professors. This is printed in the May *Bulletin* entitled, "The History of the Concept of Freedom." Both men point out that there have been examples of "violent displacements because of opinion alone" ever since the first president of Harvard, Henry Dunster, was driven from his post "for falling into the briers of Antipedobaptism." Ludlum gives details of numerous such "displacements." He also analyzes the first report, made in the year 1915, by the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American Association of University Professors. Last March, the annual meeting of the Association was largely devoted to a discussion of freedom, and without a dissenting vote a resolution was passed opposing loyalty oaths and loyalty tests for teachers. The text of the

resolution, printed in the spring *Bulletin*, is as follows:

*Be it therefore Resolved*, By this the Thirty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Association of University Professors, that:

1. We are opposed to the requirement, by any authority, political or academic, that teachers, students, or research fellows, except those who have direct governmental responsibility or access to officially secret (classified or restricted) information, shall take special loyalty oaths or shall disclaim membership in organizations listed as subversive.
2. We express our disapproval of singling out for special investigation, the personal convictions or the political beliefs and connections of teachers or students who do not have access to official secret information.

Such practices are ineffective to identify dangerous individuals who may not hesitate to comply falsely, and the imposition of such requirements, or resort to such investigations, casts unjustified suspicion upon the teaching profession. Their true gravity lies, however, in their tendency to sap the strength of American education, American thought, and American institutions by requiring conformity to official orthodoxy of opinion and conduct.

Problems of academic freedom in the past have come out into the open only now and again, but the agitations of the present time are likely to prolong the crisis and make more insistent the need for action buttressed by conviction. In a discussion of "Professional Growth and Academic Freedom" in the May *Journal of Higher Education*, W. H. Cowley points out that at least three kinds of action are urgently needed: (1) immediate and continuing professorial education in the nature, history, and issues of academic freedom; (2) vigorous and intelligent education of the general public in the cardinal importance of academic freedom in the ongoing of our free society; and (3) greater attention to the general education of that part of the public now attending schools, colleges, and universities. The first step for the classroom teacher in the implementation of such a program is indicated by Robert Withington in a brief article, "Kremlinism in the Present Crisis" in

*School and Society* (September 30). How many teachers, Withington asks, really practice democracy in the classroom? How many teachers really encourage their students to have ideas of their own? How many teachers really let their students voice their own ideas?

The gnawing-away at the vitals of academic freedom, however, is only one factor in the present crisis. L. A. Nikolovic, a Washington lawyer, points out in the summer *American Scholar* that the basic concept of the government loyalty program is to ferret out the "potentially disloyal," and this in itself violates an important principle of Anglo-American law. This program, he states, also violates judicial safeguards against punishment which are traditional in free societies and distorts the concept of equal justice under the law. He gives numerous examples from actual cases in recent loyalty investigations of the methods of questioning and the evidence introduced. They read like the travesties of trials conducted by the Nazis. He states his frightening conclusion that "the atmosphere in government is one of fear—fear of ideas and of irresponsible and unknown informers."

What disastrous results this agitation could leave in its wake is apparent from Margaret K. Webb's "The Russian Dilemma: Thinkers or Robots" in the autumn *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Mrs. Webb writes of her personal experiences in the Soviet Union, where she went in 1947 with her husband, who is an accountant with the State Department. She speaks Russian and while there was able to make a study of Soviet education. She has the same gift for sensitized observation as Nora Waln, and her picture of school and college life under the "thought control" system of the U.S.S.R. shows only too clearly what happens when a government sets out with the intent of protecting its people—just a little—just as much as is necessary—from alien thought. The Russian students get a thorough training, yet "they are deprived of that most important gift of education, intellectual independence." As a result, Mrs. Webb

says, the Soviet government is in a dilemma." It wants citizens who believe only what they are supposed to believe on political issues, but it wants them to think for themselves on other matters." Why is it that so few students ever venture from the path of conformity? "It is because they are afraid."

ANOTHER CONTROVERSY INVOLVES the veracity of some well-known magazines. On March 18 the *Saturday Evening Post* printed an article called "The Federal Snoops Are after Me," by Robinson McIlvane, publisher of a weekly newspaper, the *Archive*, in Downingtown, Pennsylvania. He reported unfair treatment in a federal inves-

tigation of the employment of high school boys to fold papers. Ages and wages were involved. On April 8 the *Nation* presented a very different picture of the case, clearly based upon the investigator's report. *America* (Catholic weekly review) had an article similar to that in the *Nation*. The October issue of the *Reader's Digest* condenses the *Saturday Evening Post* story. Labor Department officials are protesting and quote one statement of the high school principal, who understandably had tried to keep out of the row, in direct opposition to one of the main points in the *Post*. Perhaps readers' choices of which to believe will be determined by their prejudices.

### About Culture

WALLACE STEGNER, TEACHER, contributor to *College English*, and creative writer of no mean worth, has been awarded the first prize for the winning short story in the annual O. Henry Prize competition. His story, "The Blue-winged Teal," first appeared in *Harper's*; it is currently reprinted together with twenty runners-up in *Prize Stories of 1950*. Stegner, who teaches creative writing at Stanford University, has won second prize twice in previous years. Second and third prizes this year were awarded to Gudger Bart Leiper of Chattanooga and Robert Lowry of Cincinnati.

THE CENTENNIAL ISSUE OF *HARPER'S Magazine*, dated October, 1950, is naturally devoted largely to reminiscence. Bernard DeVoto's opening article, "The Century," is an Olympian interpretation of historical movements somewhat like that of H. G. Wells and at the same time a patriotic panegyric which may be useful in rousing young people to enthusiasm for our democracy. Editor Frederick Lewis Allen's "The Big Change" contrasts the rural and agricultural, heterogeneous America of 1900 with primarily urban, relatively homogeneous American civilization of 1950. Somewhat less effectively Russell Lynes depicts "The

Age of Taste." The illustrations from earlier years of the magazine are interestingly quaint, and the view of "The U.S.A. from the Air" in sharp contrast. There are also short stories by Katherine Anne Porter and William Faulkner, etc.

THE *SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE* is publishing a weekly series of literary re-evaluations in conjunction with the National Broadcasting Company and the University of Louisville. Eighteen authors will be discussed. Concurrently with this series the "N.B.C. Theatre" will present a dramatization of a work by each author concerned. The series starts with the issue of September 23.

GILBERT SELDES, WRITING IN THE October *Atlantic*, expresses the hope that Hollywood (or radio) will be unable to take over television. He views it as an essentially new medium which by virtue of the immediacy of its visual image—not in a public theater but in one's own home—makes it better suited than the movies for the portrayal of character. The best TV shows to date, whether drama or variety programs, are built around characters rather than plot; this Seldes hails as a good sign. Although the

plot-ridden movie stories might be received by an omnivorous audience, they are not the best TV can offer. Television, where the arts of entertainment and communication reach their highest points, should develop higher standards of its own.

"DEAN SWIFT AS A HUMAN BEING" is the subject of Oliver St. John Gogarty in the October *Atlantic*. He asserts on authority of Dublin playwright Denis Thompson that Swift was the illegitimate son of Sir John Temple and therefore the half-brother of Sir William Temple, whom he served as secretary. Thus, says Gogarty, he was uncle to Stella, which explains his behavior to her. It also explains, Gogarty thinks, his treatment of Vanessa. Certainly, if correct, it also explains his bitter unhappiness.

THE OCTOBER *TOMORROW* CONTAINS three literary articles of considerable interest. Padraic Colum writes on "The Future of the Novel," Thomas Sugrue on clichés, and Kathleen Coyle on James Joyce.

Colum maintains that the reading public on the higher level is tired of commonplace externality in its novels and that the immediate problem of the novelist today "is to diminish the externality that is inherent in prose narrative." He thinks it can be done through adopting some of the methods of the dramatist and shows how Henry James accomplished it by such methods, by organizing his chapters as if they were scenes in a play, by his use of revelatory dialogue that expresses character and forwards the action, and so on. He illustrates by analyzing passages from *Princess Casamassima*, *The Golden Bowl*, and *The Awkward Age* and, in so doing, says much of interest about the craft of Henry James.

Thomas Sugrue in his "American Note-

book" writes a delightful account of the New England cliché "as an instrument employed in the folk psychology of backyard conversation," an article to which students might well be referred.

James Joyce, through his experiments with language, has put such a high hurdle between himself and the general reading public that he seems very remote to the average reader. Kathleen Coyle writes of her last visit to Joyce in Paris in 1937. From her description, Joyce both as man and as author comes much nearer.

ONE OF THE BEST ESSAYS ON Wordsworth which the centenary of his death has produced is Frederick A. Pottle's "The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth" in the fortieth anniversary issue of the *Yale Review*. The problem of genesis is always important, and Pottle does us considerable service by taking the touchstone of Wordsworth's theory, "Poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity," and his statement, "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject," and showing how they are reconciled in Wordsworth's poetic practice. He traces Wordsworth's creative process in the making of "I wandered lonely as a cloud" from the walk he and Dorothy took on which they saw the daffodils, to the final writing of the poem. In so doing, Pottle shows that Wordsworth was not writing as a descriptive poet but actually practicing his own theory. The poem was written some two years after the walk. The subject he looked at steadily was a mental image, the eye, "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude." As Pottle concludes, the mental image accompanies or is the source of the emotion recollected in tranquillity; it recurs in memory not once but many times, and on each occasion the poet looks at it steadily to see what it means.

## New Books

### Professional

**COMMUNICATION IN GENERAL EDUCATION.** Edited by EARL JAMES McGRATH. Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1949. Pp. 244.

If it be true that "a decent and intelligible use of English for communication is a *sine qua non* of the educated man," *Communication in General Education* presents ample evidence that many colleges and universities of the United States have been diligently seeking to turn out educated graduates. That they are succeeding is by no means equally evident. The very fact that a large number of the articles in this book describe newly organized attempts at effective teaching of communication (whether writing alone or writing and speaking combined)—this fact in itself testifies to a lively sense that traditional methods of teaching have been ineffective.

The remedy for this condition has been sought in new methods. These are described in twelve of the eighteen articles which compose this book. In these twelve articles are presented the details of new methods used in the teaching of composition and communication at nine of the leading universities of the country, chiefly in the Middle West. Whether the courses here described, with their widely differing methods, are uniformly effective in producing the *sine qua non* of the educated man, one may be permitted to doubt. To the degree, however, that the articles which describe them give evidence of a continuing desire for further improvement of teaching, the situation is a far from hopeless one.

Indeed, much that is contained in these articles has high suggestive value for those who are seeking to shake their courses in composition and communication out of the doldrums and to increase the effectiveness of these courses. Particularly suggestive are the accounts of the work being done at Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, and Purdue. A careful consideration of the various efforts at improvement of the work at these institutions can hardly fail to stimulate the thinking of all concerned about what may be done to

make courses in composition and communication truly effective means of producing educated graduates.

The other articles in this book deal with special problems, involved in effective communication and its teaching. All have something to offer to the teacher. But, with the exception of one of these, all are concerned with method rather than with the teacher himself. Indeed the chief emphasis of the entire book is on improvement in methods, the teacher himself being relegated to relatively minor consideration.

But it is the teacher of the courses in composition and communication who is really of primary importance. Without better teachers better teaching can hardly result. Many of the articles in this book do, it is true, give evidence that certain institutions are trying, by careful supervision and direction, to improve the quality of their teaching, to make their teachers better teachers. But only Professor Perrin, in "Graduate Work for Teachers of Communication," places the emphasis where it belongs, on the preparation of competent teachers for the teaching they will do. His article has great suggestiveness. But it can hardly be said to do much more than open the subject for consideration. Until institutions of higher learning are willing to admit that teachers of composition and communication need training which will make them truly competent and until these institutions are willing to recognize the teaching of composition and communications courses on a level with the teaching of what are thought of as advanced courses, whatever progress is made in the teaching of these courses will be piecemeal and fragmentary rather than truly satisfactory.

C. REXFORD DAVIS

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

**WRITING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.** By MABEL LOUISE ROBINSON. Nelson. Pp. 256. \$2.75.

The author's earlier *Juvenile Story Writing* has been reworked into a modern, rather com-

plete guide for would-be writers of children's literature—a field into which more teachers are venturing. Miss Robinson is a teacher of creative writing at Columbia and a successful writer of adult and juvenile fiction.

**HUMAN RELATIONS IN CURRICULUM CHANGE.** (Illinois Secondary School Curriculum Program Bulletin No. 7.) Superintendent of Public Instruction (Springfield). Pp. 316. Paper.

A selection of readings previously published as articles or in books which bolster the thesis that, to be effective, curricular change requires a like change in the thinking of all groups concerned with the school—including parents.

**THE YEAR OF THE OATH.** By GEORGE R. STEWART. Doubleday. Pp. 156. \$2.00.

The story of the great struggle between the faculty and the regents of the University of California (both Berkeley and Los Angeles) is told by a moderate member of the faculty. Nominally the struggle was over the requirement of a special anti-Communist oath, but the faculty members felt it was a question of arbitrary use of power. Stewart and unnamed collaborators finished their manuscript in June, when the regents had yielded—temporarily. In August the regents reconsidered, reimposed the oath, and discharged thirty-two nonsigners. Some faculty members have since resigned in protest. Faculties elsewhere will do well to study the stages of the California battle.

## College Teaching Materials

**THE SEARCH FOR PERSONAL FREEDOM.** By NEAL M. CROSS and LESLIE DAE LINDOU (Colorado State College of Education). Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. 2 vols. (Vol. I: Introduction, "The Greek and Roman Epochs," "Some Teachings of Jesus," and "The Pulls of Life and Death in the Middle Ages"; Vol. II: "The Epoch of the Renaissance: The Clear Vision of the World Brings New Glory and New Pessimism to Man," "The Epoch of the World Machine," and "The Epoch of Relativity"). Pp. 282 and 283. \$9.00.

*The Search for Personal Freedom* is a "unified text in the humanities," which combines the elements of art, music, and literature, and a generous selection of representative works with a theory of cultural history and an analysis of contemporary culture. The unifying idea, that the goal and value of cultural endeavor lie in the search for personal freedom, is used both to stimulate and to circumscribe the good life possible today: "freedom of the individual in our time cannot be achieved wholesale, within the cultural pattern, as it was, let us say, in the Middle Ages, or in the Victorian times" (II, 283). Today, at best, we are headed for a "primary adjustment" to the era of relativity.

The authors are to be commended for their courage and energy in presenting a large and complicated body of material in a readable and attractive form, but their book is overambitious and pays the penalty in a loss of standard in sev-

eral ways. Thus the quality of reproductions used is uneven and often not up to the standard demanded by Professor Rannels of Kentucky in his study of illustrations used in art texts. Again, their historical construction lacks cogency. For example, Goethe is treated in terms of "primary adjustment" to the world machine, whereas his entire life and work were an unending protest against the idea of the world machine (as any reader of Randall's *Making of the Modern Mind* ought to know). And if it is "the belief of the authors that the quality of the people must receive first attention" (i.e., before institutions), then, to be consistent, they must be concerned with choosing potentially lasting rather than admittedly ephemeral authors. If the British Broadcasting Company can interpret James Joyce to the radio public, it is substandard for American college teachers to say: "Whereas only a few people know of the work of James Joyce and a much fewer number [*sic*] can understand him. . . ."

If only there were an institute for the advanced study of culture, where enterprising teachers of the humanities could achieve that orientation toward contemporary culture and develop those principles of cultural history which are, and quite commendably, the quest of the authors of this text and of a growing number of their colleagues!

ERNEST C. HASSOLD

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

**WRITING WITH A PURPOSE.** By JAMES M. MCCRIMMON. Houghton Mifflin. Pp. 624. \$3.25.

The title of this text denotes its emphasis. Professor McCrimmon faces full front the fact that too much college freshman composition is unmotivated. He feels that, if the needs of a particular assignment are analyzed, the student will get a sense of perspective on his writing problems and this will produce desirable results. The theme of purpose has therefore been developed through each of the five main sections of the book. The first deals with the writing process from the choice of subject through restriction, organization, and elaboration; the second with diction; the third with morphology, syntax, and the conventions of grammar and mechanics; the fourth with special assignments, summaries, research papers, etc.; and the fifth with a glossary on current usage.

**PATTERNS IN WRITING: A BOOK OF READINGS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS.** By ROBERT B. DOREMUS, EDGAR W. LACY, and GEORGE BUSH RODMAN. William Sloane. Pp. 702. \$3.00.

Sixty-five selections of widely varying tones have been chosen with the primary purpose of pointing out to students how authors have solved—or failed to solve—their particular problems in communication. They have been grouped on the basis of purpose, in the general categories of experience and observation, explanation, evaluation, persuasion, research, the craft of writing, and narration.

**15 STORIES.** Selected by HERBERT BARROWS. D. C. Heath. Pp. 211. \$1.50.

This collection has been planned around a central group of five stories of a character to make serious demands upon the student's sensibility and skill as a reader. Other stories included serve other purposes. All are excellent. Three, by Dylan Thomas, Eudora Welty, and Alun Lewis, are new to anthologies. Critical apparatus is deliberately omitted, but brief biographical notes and a suggested reading list are appended.

**MODERN DRAMA FOR ANALYSIS.** By PAUL M. CUBETS. William Sloane. Pp. 584. \$2.90.

Eight plays selected by the author because he has found them to be teachable plays of intrinsic

merit which demonstrate well both the techniques of play-writing and the resources of the modern theater. Biographical notes and bibliography are appended. Detailed analyses are published separately in a *Teaching Guide* for the instructor.

**THE SPEAKING VOICE.** By RUTH B. MAN-  
SER and LEONARD FINLAN. Longmans, Green.  
Pp. 399. \$4.00.

A text which should be really helpful to students who want to improve their speaking voices. The first section contains the necessary functional information about breathing, phonation, etc. The text is clear and simple and so are the diagrams which illustrate it. The second section deals with specific vocal faults and includes carefully graded exercises for their correction.

**SYLLABUS OF WRITTEN AND SPOKEN ENGLISH.** Rev. ed. Michigan State College Press. Pp. 122.

This student handbook has been written by the members of the Department of Written and Spoken English of Michigan State College for their freshman course in basic communication skills. For teachers it provides a good illustration of how one college has gone about setting up and developing such a course.

**THEME-CRAFT: THE PLANNING AND WRITING OF DOCUMENTED PAPERS.** By KATHERINE H. PORTER and MARGARET WATERMAN. Western Reserve University. Pp. 35. Paper-back.

This helpful little guide takes the student step by step through the various stages of preparing a research paper. One of the best features is the illustrative material taken from English 101, Flora Stone Mather College. These include outlines representing three stages in evolving a satisfactory plan for a documented paper and the final form of one student paper.

**A COMPLETE COLLEGE READER.** By JOHN HOLMES and CARROLL S. TOWLE. Houghton Mifflin. Pp. 1,063. \$4.00.

The authors label this reader as "complete" because "it contains something of everything, from the past and present," and its generous samplings are indeed drawn "from the huge library of the world." It includes a complete novel (*My Antonia*), three plays (*An Enemy of the People*, *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Winter set*), nineteen short stories, just short of one hundred di-

verse pieces of nonfictional writing, and more than one hundred poems from Chaucer to T. S. Eliot. They are arranged not chronologically but in topical categories, each of which is introduced with a brief, pointed editorial note. Brief biographical notes are appended. The emphasis is upon the contemporary, although the past is by no means avoided.

**ENGLISH LITERATURE AND ITS BACK-  
GROUNDS.** Shorter ed. By Grebanier, Middlebrook, Thompson, and Watt. Dryden Press. Pp. 1,398. \$5.50.

A shorter, one-volume edition of the original two-volume anthology which appeared in 1949. The introductory chapters, illustrations, and teaching aids have all been retained; the condensation has been achieved by omitting fifteen full-length plays and the selections from foreign literatures.

**MODERN SHORT STORIES.** By ROBERT B. HEILMAN. Harcourt, Brace. Pp. 438. \$2.00.

A critical anthology which includes twenty-nine stories selected for their immediate appeal to the student reader and because they possess "likeness with difference." Each story is preceded by a brief biographical note and is followed by a brief critical comment.

**A WRITER'S READER.** By PHILIP WEBSTER SOUERS, JOHN C. SHERWOOD, and IRMA Z. SHERWOOD. Harcourt, Brace. Pp. 367. \$1.90.

The subtitle to this textbook, "Models and Materials for the Essay," indicates its method. The first part contains thirty-two essays, with questions after each selection to help the student analyze the writers' techniques. The second part, "Analysis of Raw Materials," contains seven exercises, each containing related but unassimilated facts out of which an essay can be made and each specifically based on one of the models in the first part.

**AMERICAN LITERATURE BY NEGRO  
AUTHORS.** By HERMAN DREER. Macmillan. Pp. 334.

Intended for use as a textbook in high school and junior college, this volume differs from many such because the selections have purposely been chosen to show that the Negro's culture is an American culture and that the Negro's aspirations are the aspirations of an American citizen. Representative authors and some of their works are arranged to show how Negro writers have treated each type of American literature. Professor Dreer, himself a Negro, contributes an introduction to each of the major types: folklore, poetry, letters, biography and autobiography, essays, addresses, short stories, novels, and plays. Much of the material is unfamiliar. All of it is fresh. May be used as either a basal or a supplementary textbook in the study of American literature.

## Films

**SPEECH: THE FUNCTION OF GESTURES.**  
E. C. BUEHLER, adviser. Young America Films. Time: 11 minutes. Black and white. With *Teachers Guide*. \$40.00.

This film for use in English and speech classes at the high school and college levels is convincing in developing the idea that gestures are neither sophisticated nor silly; rather, that they help the speaker to be natural and effective on the platform. Making liberal use of direct sound, the film contrasts the effectiveness of a speech given by George Johnson, a rigid, expressionless speaker, with the same words spoken by a young speaker who makes free and natural use of gestures. The demonstration convinces even George as a member of the audi-

ence: the film ends with him before a mirror, practicing the same speech—with gestures.

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**THE DICTIONARY, Part I.** MAXWELL DRESSER, producer. Young America Films. Filmstrip of 44 frames. \$3.50.

This filmstrip may be recommended (with some qualifications) particularly for its section on how to use the pronunciation guide in a dictionary. Textbooks on speech ordinarily neglect to make clear to the student just how to learn to pronounce words by the use of the dictionary. This filmstrip first tells the student the

distinction between the abridged and unabridged; it then takes up syllables, accents, and sounds of words. The teacher will probably wish to supply some omissions in the film; for example, the fact that dictionaries may give two pronunciations for one word. A chart of sounds furnished gratis by the G. and C. Merriam Company should be put in the hands of each student to assist him in learning the system set forth in this filmstrip.

EMANUEL L. GEBAUER

JOHN HAY HIGH SCHOOL  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

**THE DICTIONARY**, Part II. MAXWELL DRESSER, producer. Young America Films. Filmstrip of 32 frames. \$3.50.

Not so practical as Part I, this filmstrip may be run through more rapidly with the class. Synonyms and antonyms are illustrated. Some teachers may want to call attention to an omission in the film—that the principal parts of a specific irregular verb may be found in the dictionary. The special sections of the dictionary, such as the Addenda; Abbreviations; Forms of Address; Arbitrary Signs and Symbols; Population; Gazetteer; and Biographical Dictionary are properly stressed.

E. L. G.

## Nonfiction

**MENABONI'S BIRDS.** By ATHOS and SARA MENABONI. Rinehart. \$10.00.

Born in Italy, Menaboni lives in Atlanta, where he spends most of his time in the swamps and forests studying, loving, and painting birds. He has caught the beauty of birds in flight, of nesting birds and watchful birds. The colorings are gorgeous, the postures subtle and realistic. There are 32 plates in natural color, 13 in black and white. There are also pictures of moths, seeds, grasses, etc. Mrs. Menaboni contributed a story of the life they live with the birds. A short description of each bird is included. It would be hard to exaggerate the beauty and charm of this book. An ideal Christmas or Easter gift. 132 pages about 9½" × 12".

**DRAWN FROM MEMORY.** By JOHN T. McCUTCHEON. Bobbs-Merrill. \$5.00.

Of particular interest to readers of the *Chicago Tribune* who have feasted upon McCutcheon cartoons. The true value of the autobiography (completed by his wife) lies in the personality of the man. He lived richly, had many and varied interests, made warm and lasting friendships. He traveled widely, dreamed, and wrote his dreams in words and cartoons. His human interest was reflected in all he did. He was an honorable man. The book includes many cartoons.

**THE LIFE OF MAHATMA GANDHI.** By LOUIS FISCHER. Harper. \$5.00.

A very complete life of Gandhi by a man who knew him personally and is considered an authority on India. He has known well the men

and women who were near Gandhi, and he was present when Gandhi was killed. This is a rich, understanding study (some may say too uncritical) of a great personality. Pearl Buck says: "Gandhi emerges as a leader who refused violence not merely because it was wrong but because he understood what so few leaders understand, that violence is foolish and doomed from the start." Very readable. End maps. Photographs. 558 pages.

**THE PAGEANT OF RUSSIAN HISTORY.** By ELIZABETH SEEGER. Longmans. \$4.50.

The author stresses the influence upon a nation of heredity and environment, of skills, philosophy, problems, history, folklore, their legends, their invaders and rulers, their peculiar experiences. This heritage, she says, we must know to understand a people. Interesting, provocative, easy to read. Maps and illustrations.

**JANE MECOM: FRANKLIN'S FAVORITE SISTER.** By CARL VAN DOREN. Viking. \$4.00.

Narrated from their surviving correspondence. Not fictionized. What people thought and did, ate and wore, how they furnished their houses during Colonial and Revolutionary times is all reflected. Research through old wills, records, advertisements, and inventories have contributed an authentic background. Preface: "Her time and countless obscure women of her time live in her." Jane Mecom "would not have suspected she left as many traces as she did." How far that little candle throws its beam, and how universal her life may be!

**ERNEST HEMINGWAY: THE MAN AND HIS WORK.** Edited by JOHN K. M. McCaffery. World Pub. Co. \$3.50.

This symposium of critical articles by leading critics affords a wide and astute commentary on the writer who has written for the "lost generation" in bitterness and disillusion. Three essays on "The Man," nearly twenty on "His Work." A distinguished collection, notable for concentration on his writing and freedom from gossip about personal habits. A study of one writer which may be applied to our understanding of others.

**THE ART OF THE POTTER.** By W. B. HONEY. McGraw-Hill. \$6.50.

A handsome, instructive volume with profuse illustrations showing the development of the potter's art from the ancient Greek wares to the porcelain of today. Technique, material, processes, modeling, and painting all are explained. The many plates, showing primitive, Meissen, Chelsea, T'ang period, Staffordshire, are beautiful.

**HOW TO LAY A NEST EGG.** By EDGAR SCOTT. Introduction by EMILY KIMBROUGH.

A stockbroker with some reputation as a wit explains, avowedly for women who know nothing about investments, what common and preferred stocks are and advises diversified investment in them—under the advice of a local banker or broker.

**READING FOR PROFIT.** By MONTGOMERY BELGION. Henry Regnery (Chicago). Pp. 291. \$3.00.

Designed as a guide for the educated reader who would get the most enjoyment (and other attendant values) from reading. Belgion's thesis is that one must read literature rather than about it, he must be receptive and pursue his reading in an organized fashion—putting aside whatever does not interest him—and he must read only what he decides is good literature. The major portion of the book gives criteria for evaluating various forms of literature. Includes analyses of works and recommended readings. Readable.

**FATHER OF RADIO: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LEE DE FOREST.** Wilcox & Follett. Pp. 502. \$5.00.

The story of a man of science who has lived life fully and with zest and by his invention of the electron tube has done much toward the making of many marvels which we take for granted—the radio, long-distance telephone, the talking picture, television, radar, and many more. His motivation for many of his discoveries is interesting, because it can be attributed to a combination of innate intellectual curiosity and a liberal arts education. His passionate love of literature and music and his desire to make these available to the public have stimulated much of his scientific creativity. He even writes verse. An excellent book to give to students.

## Fiction, Poetry, Plays, Essays

**A FEARFUL JOY.** By JOYCE CARY. Harper. \$3.00.

Tabitha was a most ordinary girl when Bouser, a smartly dressed cad, chanced to meet her. Eventually they eloped. Of course Bouser did not marry her, and they pursued an "off again, on again" policy for fifty-odd years. To both, life was a fearful joy. Each in the meantime had other affairs—even marriages. Clever, with well-drawn characters, but not likely to be so popular as *The Horse's Mouth*.

**THE FAR LANDS.** By JAMES NORMAN HALL. Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$3.00.

By the author (with Charles Nordhoff) of *Mutiny on the Bounty*. Hall has lived in Tahiti for many years and married a half-Tahitian. The

story opens with a prologue in which a descendant of the Tena Clan (Tongans) promises to tell a tale of a clan of ancient Polynesians and their desperate voyages as they sought a land where they might live in peace. The story follows. A story of romance—ancient legends and mystery. A fitting tale to be read with *Kon-Tiki*. Hall believes the Polynesians came from India.

**BURNING BRIGHT.** By JOHN STEINBECK. Viking. \$2.50.

"This is the third attempt I have made to work in this new form—the play-novelette," says the author. Most people, he believes, do not like to read plays, and therefore he writes fiction so that the dialogue when lifted out becomes a play. Here are four scenes and four characters.

The story is modern, concerned with human faults and needs—something of a morality play. Rather startling at times, with the Steinbeck touch.

**THE DISENCHANTED.** By BUDD SCHULBERG. Random. \$3.50.

By the author of *What Makes Sammy Run*. In the twenties Manley Halliday was "sitting on the top of the world." He had a beautiful wife, wealth, fame, an artistic gift, popularity, and a zest for living. Ten years later—the gloomy thirties—found wealth and fame gone. He did not give up easily; he struggled. A story of success and the tragedy of love and human relations. "In America nothing fails like success. . . . A second chance. That's the delusion. There never was but one." A Hollywood touch. A tragic story, gripping, pitiless, and tense.

**THE BARRIER.** By DOROTHY LES TINA. Rinehart. \$2.75.

There are very few characters, but they are very real. They all have frustrations—secrets and dreams. There are some startling questions. Should life and society demand self-sacrifice? Is mercy killing ever justified? It is largely the story of Harriet—a not too young or too attractive girl—the few people whom she meets, and her senile mother. There is an eerie quality about the story and its telling—simple and fascinating.

**BLANDINGS' WAY.** By ERIC HODGINS. Simon & Schuster. \$3.00.

Mr. Blandings built his dream house in 1946. He was a successful New York advertising man who yearned to do good, and the simple life in a New England small town appealed to him. Unfortunately he could always see both sides of a question, and so when he became a social force he was frequently misunderstood by the natives. You yourself may have faced his dilemmas, and you will have a fellow-feeling for Mr. B. Mr. B. had a wife and two teen-aged daughters, who helped. Maybe this is social satire and maybe it is just plain human nature. October Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

**FOLLOW THE SEVENTH MAN.** By ROBERT STANDISH. Macmillan. \$3.00.

By the author of *The Three Bamboos* and *Elephant Walk*. Out of his knowledge of the East Mr. Standish has written of a young sultan in Zimbato whose English education has not

lessened his oriental guile. Peter—an Englishman chosen by Selim to act as civil adviser—and his wife Susan had known the sultan in childhood. A powerful story of the tropics, their effect upon a white man, and the grafting of the white man's culture upon the oriental. Not a pretty story, but enlightening and at this time suggestive.

**THE DARLINGTONS.** By SYLVIA BROOKE. Farrar, Straus. \$3.00.

A novel of mid-Victorian England by an Englishwoman. Lord Darlington, country squire, was a ladies' man. His wife was a prude. One of the twin daughters was beautiful but selfish and ruthless. The other was a prissy—a bookworm and unattractive. The girls grew up and were presented at court. More complications arose. There are touches of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. The end is melodramatic, but the book is a lot of fun and out of the ordinary.

**ONE BRIGHT DAY.** By PEARL S. BUCK. John Day. \$2.00.

Based upon an actual experience of Pearl S. Buck and her two little girls. An American mother, sailing from Shanghai to California, stopped for one day in Japan. There they met a kindly, wise old Japanese gentleman and were his guests for the day. He in return thanked them for the happy day they had given him. A book for children, yes, but rewarding and rich in implications for the adult. 60 pages. Japanese-scene end papers.

**CHAMPION ROAD.** By FRANK TILSLEY. Messner. \$3.50.

Jonathan Briggs was a self-made man: lusty, stubborn, tough, a fighter, and a winner. He married Nellie, and this is largely his story of their life. Lancaster is the background; time, world wars and present. The book has received high praise in England. Big scenes, huge drama. Slightly redundant. 563 pages. October Literary Guild choice.

**THE OXFORD BOOK OF AMERICAN VERSE.** Selected with Introduction by F. O. MATTHIESSEN. Oxford. Pp. 1,132. \$5.00.

The character of this volume is generally indicated by the jog list which Professor Matthiessen set for himself as a guide to anthology-making: fewer poets, with more space for each;

nothing included on merely historical grounds; nothing included that the anthologist doesn't really like; not too many sonnets; whenever practicable represent poets by poems of some length; no excerpts. The result is an anthology in which fifty-one poets are represented by 571 selections ranging from Colonial items to the present with more than half of the volume devoted to the best work of the last fifty years. Matthiessen's own critical introduction is one of the best things in the book.

**THE DREAM OF ALCESTIS.** By THEODORE MORRISON. Viking. Pp. 119. \$3.00.

A poetic retelling of the myth of Alcestis, who voluntarily took over the gods' sentence of death upon her husband, and Hercules' bringing her back from death. Alcestis, Admetus, and Hercules all become very live and plausible characters, and the story becomes rich with psychology and symbolism.

**THE AURORAS OF AUTUMN.** By WALLACE STEVENS. Knopf. Pp. 193. \$3.00.

Stevens, the seventy-one-year-old lawyer-vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, was given the 1950 Bollingen award. This book is distinctly New Poetry, somewhat difficult in vocabulary and yet more difficult in the unusual conceptions it expresses. See page 548 of this magazine.

**YOUNG MAN OF PARIS.** By HENRI CALET. Translated from the French by JACQUES LE CLERCQ. Dutton. \$3.00.

An intimate portrait of a young man's life in Paris, covering most of the twentieth century. Written in the first person with both charm and bitterness, it creates a very real and vivid Paris.

**I SEEK A CITY.** By GILBERT REES. Dutton. \$3.00.

A historical novel in four parts: "England," "The Puritans," "The Forest," and "The Charter." The story of Roger Williams, religious zealot, who left England sustained by his ideals and later, when driven out of Boston, determined to build a city (Providence) where all men could have freedom and live in harmony. The author has made extensive research.

**IN A HARBOUR GREEN.** By BENEDICT KIELY. Dutton. \$3.00.

Scene, a quiet Irish valley; time, before the recent world wars. The story opens with a mur-

der—a rather placid murder, but it touches the lives of the people of the countryside. Romance, irony, pathos. Published in England, where it has been praised.

**COUNTY CHRONICLE.** By ANGELA THIRKELL. Knopf. \$3.50.

A new Barsetshire tale for Thirkell readers. Lucy Marling, of Marling Hall, accepts the hand of a rich ironmaster, and the story rolls on, aided by "direct inspiration."

**MIXED COMPANY: COLLECTED STORIES** BY IRWIN SHAW. Random. \$3.75.

By the author of *The Young Lions*. Thirty-seven stories, seven of them never before published. Based upon contemporary life and problems. Rewarding.

**THE STORY: A CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY.** By MARK SCHORER. Prentice Hall. \$2.50.

The purpose of the anthology is to assist the reader in appreciation and evaluation of the short story. Stories by recognized masters of the art and stories on related themes differing in treatment and effect are featured. "The Turn of the Screw" is given with contrasting critical interpretations. Helpful to readers, writers, students, and teachers.

**THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES, 1950.** By FREDERICK FELL. \$2.25.

Fascinating stories by well-known authors and some new writers. In an excellent preface some of the stories are discussed.

**QUEEN OF PARADOX.** By KATHERINE BREGY. Bruce. \$3.00.

Based upon the life of Mary Queen of Scots, with special emphasis upon the influence of social changes of the age in which she lived. "She was conditioned by her background and her surroundings, 'even as you and I.'" Good.

**THE SHORT STORIES OF MARK VAN DOREN.** Edited by JULIE EIDESHEIM. Abelard. \$4.00.

Thirty-four stories, some printed for the first time. Diversified, individual, sincere.

**THE CITY IN THE DAWN.** By HERVEY ALLEN. Rinehart. \$3.50.

Allen had planned a fictional history of Colonial America, had published three novels of the series, and was working on a fourth when he died. This book contains the heart of the three and a section of the fourth. *The Forest and the*

*Fort, Bedford Village, and Toward the Morning* have been highly praised as colorful, authentic Americana.

**FOLKSONGS OF ALABAMA.** By BYRON ARNOLD. University of Alabama Press. \$4.50.

Arnold traveled all over the state collecting these songs, first with notebook and pencil, later with recording equipment. The words and music as he heard them sung include spirituals, ballads, work songs, and lovers' laments. Biographies of many singers are included, with references to other versions and old English traditions. 193 pages about 8" X 10".

**THE SEAL IN THE BEDROOM.** By JAMES THURBER. Harper. \$2.75.

New edition. Author's memoir. Enthusiastic Preface by Dorothy Parker, who says, "These are strange people that Mr. Thurber has turned loose upon us—the playful, the defeated, and the ferocious. All of them have the outer semblance of unbaked cookies." A jolly gift book. Why say more about Thurber?

**THE WISDOM OF THE SANDS.** By ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY. Translated by STUART GILBERT. Harcourt. \$4.00.

By the author of *Wind, Sand, and Stars* and *The Little Prince*. For five years he had constantly written and rewritten this manuscript, which was printed after his untimely death. Man and his grandeur, his moral and spiritual values, are his themes. A desert prince is his narrator, the wilderness his background. The language is poetic and biblical. He speaks in parables. In the Introduction Stuart Gilbert says: "He had a burning desire to see, and to make others see, the pattern behind the confusion of our age." A contemplative, philosophical book.

**THE ABANDONED.** By PAUL GALlico. Knopf. \$2.75.

By the author of *The Snow Goose*. Peter, an eight-year-old boy, was injured by a truck as he attempted to save a kitten. While he was in a coma, he had a most extraordinary experience: he became a cat, a real live cat accepted by other cats as friend or foe. Most people merely said "Scat!" A struggle for existence followed; his problems were strangely like those of human beings. A fantasy. Good!

**SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT AND OTHER ESSAYS.** By GEORGE ORWELL. Harcourt. \$2.75.

By the author of 1984 and *Animal Farm*. The title sketch is rated very high. Reflections on Gandhi, studies of *Gulliver's Travels*, *Helen's Babies*, and others will delight most readers. Written between 1931 and 1949. The author was working on these when he died. Good.

**THE BIRDS.** Translated with notes and Introduction by GILBERT MURRAY. Oxford. \$2.50.

This late comedy of Aristophanes is done in English verse that at times has the swing of a musical comedy, with modern colloquialisms suited to the fantastic satire. It is as full of personal lampoons as a student-written musical today. In the earlier, less sophisticated days of Athens, Aristophanes' treatment of the gods would have been punished as blasphemous.

**GOLD.** By WINIFRED A. NAYLOR. American Press (Los Angeles). Pp. 76. \$1.50.

An experienced teacher here expresses in straightforward verse and familiar imagery appreciation of persons, of nature, of God.

**BEST STORIES BY AFRO-AMERICAN WRITERS.** Edited by NICK AARON FORD and H. L. FAGGET. Meador Pub. Co. (Boston).

Newspaper stories, from a single source. The first group deal with interracial relations. The others present Negroes in their ordinary activities as neither saints nor degenerates. Only for special purposes is it desirable to segregate the work of colored authors in this fashion.

**THE NEW ITALIAN WRITERS.** An anthology edited by MARGUERITE CAETANI. New Directions. \$3.50.

Prose and poetry by Italy's new writers, selected from the pages of the *Roman Literary Review*. It represents many different schools and varieties and contains short notes on contributors.

**CHRISTMAS: AN AMERICAN ANNUAL OF CHRISTMAS LITERATURE AND ART, Vol. XX.** Edited by RANDOLPH E. HAUGAN. Augsburg. Paper, \$1.00; cloth, \$2.00.

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A penetrating introduction, *Myth and Metaphysics*, explains the criterion for the choice of the poems and brilliantly analyzes the whole problem of contemporary verse. Notes on the poems, many supplied by the poets themselves, elucidate the aims and techniques of the writers. *About 570 pages. To be published in January.*

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Chapters are arranged by types of writing within a period rather than in chronological order. Chapter bibliographies are at the end of the book. *About 1150 pages. To be published in February.*

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